STUDENT PARTISAN IDENTITY AND ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

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Abstract

Political division in the United States is the subject of much analysis in the fields of political science and psychology. While political partisanship looms large over discussions of the national political climate's influence on schools and classrooms, very little work exists that directly examines the effects of high school students' political beliefs. Prior research on adults indicates that political partisans are different from their non-partisan counterparts in terms of political knowledge and efficacy. Further, studies often detect biases in adults' processing of political information. Although social studies scholars are beginning to address issues of political division, researchers have yet to directly examine how partisanship influences students' perceptions, behaviors, opinions, and learning. The study described in this dissertation attempts to address this gap.

The present research is built around an online discussion of a controversial issue. Using data from three surveys, a discussion forum, and student interviews, I examine differences between partisans and non-partisans prior to the discussion, differences in behaviors these two groups exhibit during a discussion, differences in outcomes following a discussion, and differences in partisan and non-partisans' ability to consider arguments. The findings of this study generally support the argument that, similar to adults, adolescent partisans are substantially different from non-partisans in terms of their political perceptions, behavior, and cognition. There are, however, important contextual factors, such as having an open classroom climate and composition of the discussion groups, which can alter the impacts of students' partisan identities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My senior year of high school began during the fall of 2000 at the height of the presidential campaign and the beginning of what would become a ballot recount-inspired media circus. Being a senior, I was able to take an independent study during the final hour of the school day. My sponsoring teacher would usually have CNN on in the background while I and a couple other students worked on our various individual projects. Through the lens of CNN, I was able to watch the whole recount drama unfold, with conservative and liberal talking heads narrating each step of the process.

At this point in my life, I identified as a Republican. I attribute this identification to my parents. On election night in 1992, I remember being assigned by my fourth-grade teacher to color in the states won by each candidate. While dutifully shading the states won by George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, I asked my parents which person we wanted to win. Both my parents were what would be described as "moderate Republicans," though by today's standards, they would likely be considered Democrats. I learned that night that my family wanted the Republicans to win and I stuck with that allegiance into my early college years.

Looking back, I doubt my high school self would have been able to give any cogent policy reasons for my Republicanism. If asked, I would have likely spouted off something generic about them being the party of hard work and self-sufficiency. Watching the stories of the contested election unfold on TV, I recall rooting for George W. Bush despite having no knowledge of either candidate's plans or promises. I was

bothered that he hadn't won the popular vote, but found myself quite willing to embrace rationalizations about the value of the Electoral College. As the Supreme Court ruled in favor the George W. Bush and the Republicans in *Bush v. Gore*, I accepted the decision without much thought as to the constitutional implications or the evidence presented by each side.

In general, my friends and I avoided talking about politics save for a small group of two or three others whom I knew also identified as Republican. These conversations were infrequent and arose spontaneously when this particular group of people happened to be together. I do not recall any specific policy issues we discussed in this small enclave, but I do remember that most of the conversations concluded with an affirmation of how stupid and deluded the other side was.

While I was hardly the most politically involved person at my school, I believe that my senior year captures, to some extent, the experience of political partisanship in high school students. Although most are still developing some of the more nuanced elements of their own political identity, some have, for one reason or another, identified with a major political party. Like most aspects of identity, partisanship has the potential to shape how the individual perceives and interacts with the world, even if its impacts on cognition and affect are not immediately noticeable. If partisan identity in high school students functions similar to that in adults, politics could be shaping the way students learn and interact with others (Clark & Avery, 2016).

Problem: The Untold Story of Classroom Partisans

Understanding the development of partisanship and its impacts on schools is increasingly important for social studies educators in a divided political landscape. Disagreement is a prominent feature of the American political system, but only rarely do disagreements become so intractable as to divide Americans into opposing camps. Yet in recent years, partisanship has done almost exactly that. A 2014 Pew Research Center survey found that, in addition to substantial numbers of each party holding unfavorable opinions of the opposite party, 27% of Democrats and 36% of Republicans viewed their political opponents as a "threat to the nation's well-being" (p. 7). A later Pew survey (2016) found that substantial numbers of Republicans and Democrats feel "afraid" (49% and 55%, respectively), "angry"(46% and 47%), and "frustrated" (57% and 58%) by the other party (p.1). In the same report, just under half of people who converse with people with whom they politically disagree find such conversations to be "stressful and frustrating" as opposed to "interesting and informative" (p. 29). More worrisome, having such conversations does not seem to help participants find common ground. In fact, 61% of people surveyed reported that they often found they had less in common with people they disagree with than previously thought following a conversation (p. 29).

The consequences of this divide are clear for political life: vitriolic campaign rhetoric, legislative stagnation, and media balkanization, to name a few. Although these factors have seemed particularly prominent in the post-9/11 years (Huddy & Feldman, 2011), scholars of political polarization connect the current state of division to partisan realignments dating back to the 1960s (Abramowitz, 2010; Heatherington & Weiler,

2009; Levendusky, 2009). Often, political divides reflect social divides over race, class, and religion. Given the intersection of politics with a number of other significant social identities, it is unsurprising that partisan allegiance would also be, for many, a salient social identity.

These divisions frequently manifest in the social studies classroom. While the citizenship goals of social studies education often seek to prepare young people for political engagement, the real world conduct of politics fails to align with the deliberative values held by many educators (Achen & Bartels, 2016; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011). Further, partisanship among students may breed conflict in the classroom, and partisan parents, administrators, and community members may also take issue with curricular and pedagogical decisions (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). Political conflict can disengage students (Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge, 2013) and push them away from electoral politics. There is a growing trend of young people preferring direct involvement in their communities to involvement in political campaigns (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013).

According to major reports (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; Committee on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge, 2013), the appropriate educational response to a polarized political climate is good civic education pedagogy and promotion of deliberative values (such as openness to alternative viewpoints). Yet, more empirical evidence is needed to support these recommendations. Good pedagogy can increase political engagement (Hess & McAvoy, 2015) and exposure to deliberation can increase students' perspective taking (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013, 2014). Research on adults

(Mutz, 2006) suggests that political engagement and openness to new ideas are inversely related, meaning individuals that are highly engaged in politics tend to be less receptive to differing opinions. Data that measures how deliberative dispositions (such as openness) interact with students' political engagement could determine whether the relationships observed in adults exist in students.

Additionally, political identity has not often been examined as a correlate of classroom behavior or learning. Research on adults, however, suggests that political, particularly partisan, identities can influence how individuals treat one another (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015) and perceive their learning environments (Kelly-Woessner & Woessner, 2008). High school students are on the cusp of developing more stable political identities (Converse, 1969; Sears, 1983, 1990), so the question of whether their nascent identities are strong enough to produce similar effects merits investigation.

Purpose of the Study

There is a lack of work in civics education that addresses the complexity of fostering citizenship in a politically divided society. In particular, more information about how politics impacts the day-to-day functioning of the classroom would be beneficial. In this work, I strive for a more comprehensive understanding of partisan high school students and how their political beliefs shape both individual behavior and classroom context. I examine how students' political beliefs and political group identification impact them throughout the course of an online discussion. Specifically, I am interested in four lines of inquiry regarding partisan and non-partisan students:

1. Are partisan students different from their non-partisan peers in terms of political and civic knowledge, sense of civic efficacy, and perceptions of the classroom environment (e.g., climate for discussion, perceptions of classmates, and teacher opinion)?
2. Do partisan students behave differently than their non-partisan peers in the context of small group deliberations? Does the composition of deliberative groups (e.g., partisan unanimity, presence of non-partisan members, presence of disagreeing partisans) moderate these behaviors?
3. Are partisan and non-partisan students impacted differently by deliberation? In other words, are changes in sense of civic efficacy, opinions about political groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), or issue opinions different between partisans and non-partisans? Does deliberative group composition moderate these changes?
4. Does the strength of students' partisanship influence the degree to which they consider differing opinions or opposing arguments?

Outline of the Dissertation

In order to better understand the behaviors and perceptions held by partisan students in comparison to their non-partisan peers, the present study focuses on four areas relevant to the social studies classroom: students' baseline political knowledge and political efficacy, behavior during a deliberation, changes in opinions and feelings following a deliberation, and assessments of the class at the end of the semester.

The second chapter explores the literature in both social studies and political science/political psychology. In reviewing the literature I develop a theoretical framework that is grounded in the ideals of education for deliberative democracy and social identity theory. I focus on how students develop partisan identities, and what the implications are for those identities in the classroom. I close the chapter with a review of discussion of controversial political issues in the social studies classroom and the existing literature on partisanship in the classroom.

The third chapter lays out the research methods for this study of partisanship. The research instruments will center on an online deliberation of a controversial political issue. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods, I gather data about the impact of such a deliberation on individual perceptions of others (partisan and non-partisan), student learning, and the interaction of student beliefs and social context. Quantitatively, I use three surveys to gather data on student opinions and perceptions before the deliberation, after, and at the end of the semester, as well as coded transcripts of student deliberations to establish tallies of specific deliberative behaviors (asking questions, summarizing positions, expressing opinions, etc.). Qualitatively, transcripts of the deliberation and student interviews provide insight into how students perceive and learn from the deliberative exercises.

The fourth and fifth chapters report and discuss the results of this study. I find that partisanship is correlated with differences in student knowledge and political efficacy. Partisanship also shapes students' perceptions of their classrooms and their behavior during discussions. I also find that student partisanship impacts students' response to

discussions, though these responses are often moderated by students' discussion group conditions. Lastly, student partisans seem to learn from discussions, but generally only in a way that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs.

In the concluding chapter I discuss the significance of these findings for social studies teachers and researchers. Further, I highlight the contributions this study makes to the field of social studies and social science research.

Significance of the Study

Despite plentiful research on how to achieve discussions that are open, rigorous, and informative (e.g., Hess, 2009; Parker & Hess, 2001), little research in social studies education focuses on student partisanship and how the particular social and psychological functioning of partisan identity may impact learning and the classroom community. Such a focus is important for theory and research because it can help shed light on a particularly vexing theoretical issue in politics and social studies education: the attempt to make civic engagement and deliberative openness coexist. Although some researchers (e.g., Hess & McAvoy, 2014; Mutz, 2006) argue that high levels of political engagement and openness to new ideas are mutually exclusive ends, social studies educators often hold up both as civic ideals. Scholars in political science and psychology have extensively explored these contrasting ideas and many of the processes that underlay partisan thinking and behavior in adults. Social studies scholars, on the other hand, are only beginning to address the paradox. There is a large gap in the research about the functioning of students in a politically divided society. In order to address this gap,

research is needed that specifically examines the impacts of partisan beliefs of students and how such beliefs impact classroom behaviors.

The results of this study can also inform teacher decisions about addressing controversial political issues in classrooms. For example, as the partisan opinion composition of student groups is manipulated, classroom teachers can use data about the behavior of partisan and non-partisan students under different conditions when considering how to assign their students to small groups. Further, this study can explore how student political beliefs impact their perceptions of their teacher and peers. Such information can aid teachers in deciding when and how to disclose their political opinions. Lastly, more empirical data on how partisan identity shapes classroom behavior can provide insights into how other identities influence how students process information (see, for example, Goldberg, 2013).

Teachers are tasked with preparing their students, partisan and non-partisan, for citizenship and the civic world beyond the classroom. A deeper understanding of student political orientations would benefit classroom teachers by leading to concrete steps they can take to better engage students and establish productive classroom communities. As political socialization research indicates (e.g., Kahne et al., 2013; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001), experiences in the classroom help shape students' political behavior. Studying the behavior and experiences of students with varying degrees of partisanship will help educators better pursue the goal of engaged, deliberative citizenship.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Partisanship in students is rarely factored into research in social studies education. In divided political times, however, understanding how a student with a partisan identity thinks and acts in the classroom is increasingly valuable. Partisanship can both enhance and detract from student learning and civic engagement. In this chapter, I begin by outlining a theoretical framework based on the goals of democratic education and social identity theory. I then turn to student identity and how partisanship can develop and function as a salient social identity, as well as the benefits and drawbacks to such an identity. Finally, I examine common classroom practices and how they relate to or are affected by student opinions and identities.

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Education

Basic conceptions of citizenship usually entail a combination of rights and responsibilities: legal protections, paying taxes, etc. Civic educators, however, generally advocate for a more robust understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.

There are differing notions of what "good" citizenship entails. In their observations of democratic education programs, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identified three different notions of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented. *Personally responsible citizenship* education focuses mainly on allegiance and identification with the country, emphasizing historical knowledge and patriotism. *Participatory citizenship* education encourages students to become actively involved in

governing institutions and the democratic process. Examples of participatory citizenship include attending city council meetings, writing or signing petitions, or running for office. *Justice-oriented citizenship* education highlights social ills and injustices, focusing on how students can work to improve society.

Later models (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008) build on the idea of societal improvement focusing on fostering student capacity, commitment, and connections. *Capacity* refers to the knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in civic life, such as knowledge of institutions and media literacy. *Commitment* reflects a student's attention to and care about important societal issues. *Connections* are the important social interactions and relationships that allow students to network with similarly committed individuals and act collectively towards goals. Likewise, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (2011) envisions ideal citizens as people who "are informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, are involved in the political process, and possess moral and civic virtues" (p. 6). In short, ideal citizens fulfill both their civic duty and actively strive to improve their communities and the nation through involvement and participation.

Education for Deliberative Democracy

If students are to have the capacity to improve society, they need to be able to engage with their fellow citizens to solve community and national problems. In most modern democracies, citizens express their will through voting though many scholars argue that this represents a weaker form of democracy than that envisioned for the United States. Rather, these scholars (e.g., Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Habermas, 1996;

Mansbridge, 1980) argue that deliberation offers a better approach to decision-making. Although there is much overlap with other forms of discussion, deliberations are distinctive in that participants specifically pursue solutions to common problems (as opposed to greater understanding or an articulation of positions).[1] In pursuit of these solutions, deliberative participants offer reasons for their views and listen to others with different views.

Education holds an important place in deliberative theory because the skills for deliberation about important public issues must be taught and practiced (Jefferson, 1824/1903; Parker, 2010). In particular, students need to develop the analytical skills necessary to understand societal problems and propose solutions. Additionally, deliberative participants need to learn to speak and listen in ways that can bridge difference and build consensus. Schools are ideal locations for deliberation, as they are often students' first sustained contact with individuals outside their immediate family or community, and provide environments where students can explore the nature of the common good (Hess 2009; Hess and McAvoy 2015; Parker 2003; Robinson, 2008)

As ideal as they sound, theories of deliberative democracy are not without their critics. One major critique of deliberation, in fact, is that it is too idealistic. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), for example, note that deliberative processes do not necessarily deliver on the promise of sound, legitimate decisions acceptable to all participants. For example, jury deliberations can wrongly convict or acquit defendants. Deliberative

[1] When describing the study in future chapters, I will often use the terms "discussion" and "deliberation" interchangeably, reflecting that the discussions in this study are deliberative but may not meet the entire theoretical criteria for deliberation.

theorists may reply that unsuccessful deliberations can be blamed on flaws in the procedures of deliberation, rather than the construct itself. Such replies, however, lead scholars such as Mutz (2008) to question whether deliberative theory is falsifiable. If deliberative failures are attributable to flaws in specific cases, then there is no instance where deliberation as a theory could be disproven. Further, even the strongest proponents of deliberation acknowledge there are few, if any, situations that fully adhere to all the specifications of an ideal deliberation.

In addition to the theoretical objections, deliberation is subject to a number of practical critiques. Although proponents of deliberative democracy argue that it is the most equitable process of making decisions, the façade of equal voice and access may conceal issues that privilege certain voices above others (Sanders, 1997; Young, 2000). For example, a key element of deliberation is the exchange of reasons among participants. The definition of a valid "reason," however, is very firmly situated in an Enlightenment model that grants precedence to rational or empirical forms of evidence. Such a model dismisses individual stories and experiences as anecdotal or, worse, appeals to emotion. Yet, as many disenfranchised communities may not have the resources or connections to gather compelling empirical data, stories may be the only opportunity they have to share their perspective. Further, cultural differences in modes of expression result in certain groups being excluded from the largely rational environment of deliberation. In short, the rules of deliberative evidence and expression end up reinforcing existing societal inequities (Sanders, 1997). Apple (2008) raises a similar issue when discussing deliberation in the classroom, noting that certain rules of communication dominate

discussion in schools. Even if alternative forms of expression and evidence are permitted in a deliberative space, there is no guarantee they will be well received by the other participants. The very act of deliberation does not inherently remove the biases of those involved (Young, 2000). For example, women participating in deliberations are often perceived as having lower status. As a result, they often speak less and are interrupted more frequently (Karpowitz & Medelberg, 2014; Karpowitz, Mendelberg, & Shaker, 2012; Krupnick, 1985; Mendelberg, Karpowitz, & Goedert, 2014; Snyder, 2014).

While deliberation in the classroom is a worthwhile endeavor, educators should be aware of its limitations. At the same time, educators can create a space for traditionally marginalized voices in their classroom deliberations and focus on the ability to discuss across multiple types of difference. Use of deliberation is vital for students as they learn to engage in a political and societal sphere that is deeply divided along numerous lines of politics, class, race, and gender.

In order for deliberation to be a fruitful endeavor, however, more research into students' participation in deliberations is needed. Teachers who use deliberation would benefit from more research into the cognitive and social processes that occur during deliberative activities. Given that the focus of the current analysis is student partisanship, I draw heavily on works from political science and psychology covering partisan thinking and behavior. Chief among these works are those pertaining to partisanship as a social identity.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) emphasizes the importance of group identification in influencing individual thinking and behavior. When group membership is a salient part of an individual's self-concept, they will seek to bolster the status of that in-group, often at the expense of out-groups. Greene (2004) argues that social identity theory is a compelling way to view partisan identification. Partisanship goes beyond simply voting for the group that best reflects one's belief on the major issues of the day. Rather, partisans will often tow the party line and root for their "team," even when the party's policies may contrast with their stated beliefs (Groenendyk, 2013; Lenz, 2012). According the Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012), partisanship as a social identity explains the particular rancor that characterizes recent American electoral politics. Affective polarization (or dislike of opposing partisans) based on social identities leads Republicans and Democrats to, in addition to disagreeing on matters of policy, generally view their opponents as ill-willed or threatening (Pew Research Center, 2014).

For social identity theory to be compelling in the context of student deliberations, it is necessary to illustrate the impacts of student identity in classrooms. The next two sections explore how student identities shape classrooms and how political partisanship can represent a salient social identity to students.

The Importance of Student Identity

Identity is more than a collection of adjectives and affiliations. Rather, it forms a lens through which individuals view the world. Group identities, in particular, tend to be quite powerful. Fraser-Burgess (2012) argues that most group identities, be they political,

economic, religious, cultural, or otherwise, carry with them beliefs that are viewed by members of the group as beyond question. In other words, because certain beliefs are definitive of membership in a social group, to question them would threaten an individual's standing in that group. Further, as social identity theory predicts, individuals will seek to maintain a positive image of their own groups. In this section, I focus on studies that illustrate how students' identification with various societal groups (race, religion, etc.) influences their thinking and behavior in social studies classrooms.

In social studies classes, one of the most common manifestations of group identity lies in students' interpretation of historical narratives. Race, for example, often predicts whether students will be critical or accepting of traditional representations of United States history. Epstein (2009) documents disparities in the narratives White and Black students use to summarize major events in United States history. White students, though often acknowledging moments when the United States failed to live up to its ideals, generally stick to a narrative of continuous progress. Black students, on the other hand, are far more critical of the national narratives presented in schools and educational materials, emphasizing historical injustices and continuing disparities in opportunity. These tendencies are typically reinforced in students' homes, with White families tending to affirm a generally positive view of national history and Black families being more critical. White students are often uncomfortable with challenges to the dominant narrative that reflect poorly on their race. Trainer (2005), for example, notes that White students will often seek to distance themselves from historical or literary illustrations of oppression by members of their race.

Strong religious identification can also frame student interpretation of information and events. James (2010) notes that undergraduate students with unwavering certainty in their theological beliefs tend to be unwilling to entertain alternative non-religious explanations on a wide variety of issues. New events are often interpreted through the religious framework in a manner that continually reinforces existing beliefs and narratives. Schweber (2006) documents such a phenomenon in her observations of a Christian school during and after the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City and Washington DC. Students and teachers at the Christian school placed the terrorist attacks into a fatalistic narrative of divine control (i.e., "Everything is part of God's plan") and used the attacks to highlight fundamentalist Christian views on subjects such as suicide and death.

Similar identity-based phenomena have been identified in international research. Catholic and Protestant students in Northern Ireland emphasize historical evidence that supports their particular identity and worldview, becoming increasingly entrenched in their religious identities as they study history (Barton & McCulley, 2005). Porat (2004) found that Israeli and Palestinian students reinforce their identities when they recall historical information. When asked to retell what they knew about conflicts in the region, Jewish and Palestinian students tended to recall more details supporting their group's side of the conflicts.

It is important to recognize that identities can be complex. It is likely that an individual student will identify with multiple groups (e.g., a student might identify as both Black and Christian). Some aspects of a complex identity may be more important

than others at a given time. A student's racial identity may be more relevant to some discussions than their religious identity, and thus would be more salient in those situations.

Partisanship as an Identity

Given that individual identities tend to be multifaceted, it is likely that some elements of a student's self-concept will be more meaningful than others. According to social identity theory, in-group/out-group distinctions form around significant social identifications. For student partisanship to influence civic outcomes, perceptions, and behavior, it would need to be a meaningful part of student identity. This section explores political partisanship as a potential foundation for in-group/out-group biases. First, I review the literature on the polarized political landscape of the United States and how social identities may drive divisive partisan behavior. Then, I examine the question of whether partisanship is a meaningful part of young people's political identities.

Partisan Polarization

While partisanship is hardly a new phenomenon in the United States, political divides have become more noticeable in recent years. Scholars disagree over the extent and manifestation of polarization, or whether the term is warranted at all. These scholars can be grouped into three broad camps: political polarization, political sorting, and affective polarization.

As the term implies, political polarization involves the American population clustering at the ends of the political/ideological spectrum. This suggests that fewer individuals have moderate or mixed ideologies than in previous decades. Nationwide

studies of the American electorate, such as the American National Election Studies (ANES) indicate that more Americans are exhibiting greater issue consistency (Abramowitz, 2010; Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). In other words, more and more individuals are expressing consistently liberal or conservative positions and fewer are expressing a mixture. The trend of increasing consistency is particularly evident among voters who display high levels of political interest, political knowledge, and campaign participation. Polarization is also represented in an increasing correlation of political party preference and ideological position. Since the 1960s, there have been diminishing numbers of conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008).

Other scholars argue that concerns over polarization are overblown and that the public is more "sorted" than polarized. Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2006) argue fears of polarization are largely a response to the polarization of political elites (e.g., politicians, party officials, and activists). Few would suggest that these elites are not polarized, but Fiorina et al. believe that those polarized sentiments have not filtered into the mass public. The mass public is still, in their estimation, relatively moderate. Levendusky (2009) argues that the changes in political alignments viewed in the ANES or other data represent a sorting process. Because of elite polarization, liberal and conservative individuals are increasingly able to identify which political party best reflects their views. Although the sorting process creates an illusion of polarization, very few Americans are moving to the extreme ends of the political spectrum.

Still other scholars define polarization not as the ideological shuffling of politicians and the public into opposing camps, but as negative affect that result from these shifts. Contentious politics may be part and parcel of a two-party political system, but especially so if those parties represent salient social identities. In that sense, concerns over whether American politics is becoming polarized or sorted may be secondary to whether or not the parties represent opposing social groups. As social identity theory suggests, individuals will seek to bolster their feelings about salient in-groups and harbor negative feelings toward out-groups. Using multiple datasets, Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) found that American partisans increasingly express dislike toward the opposing side. While the trends are particularly pronounced among the politically engaged, negative affect toward the out-party is also present among average citizens. Substantial numbers of partisans, for example, respond that they would be uncomfortable having their child marry someone of the opposite political party. Additionally, Americans increasingly view members of the out-party as threats to the well-being of the nation (Pew Research Center, 2014). Iyengar and Westwood (2015) found that research participants discriminate against out-party members in evaluating job candidate qualifications. Further, the effect sizes for party-based discrimination outweighed those for race and gender.

Scholars who study affective polarization often link their work to social identity theory. As noted earlier, social identity theory predicts that individuals will seek to bolster the status of in-groups at the expense of out-groups. Greene (2004) argues that the winner-take-all nature of most American electoral competition naturally sets the two

major parties in opposition to each other. Party loyalties can be quite strong, in many cases causing individuals to set aside their individual interests (Groenendyk, 2013). Research by Lenz (2012) finds that partisan individuals will often shift their opinion to match that of their party when they conflict.

Young People as Partisans

Partisanship can constitute an important identity for members of the voting public at large. This section explores whether or not young people as a group behave in ways similar to the rest of the public

How Political Identity (and Partisanship) Develops

Some scholars suggest that there are deep roots to a person's politics. Evolutionary psychologists suggest that there may be at least a partial link between a person's genetics and their political orientation. For example, using data from studies of twins, Alford, Funk, and Hibbing (2005) identified a partial genetic basis for political ideology (though the link was not as strong when it came to partisan identity). A biological basis for political orientation, while not deterministic, could prove influential in swaying individuals towards one ideological camp or another. A longitudinal study by Block and Block (2006) found a correlation between pre-school students' personality traits and their later political orientations. Students who were more energetic, for example, tended to be more liberal whereas students who were more rigid were more likely to be conservative two decades later.

Although dispositions may cause individuals to lean in one direction or another, socialization remains an important part of students' political development. Interaction

with parents is a key element of political socialization and, in many cases, eventual partisanship. Early models of political socialization viewed political ideas as being transferred directly from parent to child. More recent models, however, emphasize that children's political development is a more interactive process. McDevitt (2005), for example, proposes a model of *developmental provocation* where children initiate political conversations (usually as a result of exposure to political ideas in school or on the news) with their parents and receive feedback. McDevitt's panel study surrounding the 2000 election found that the degree to which students initiated political conversations with their parents was predictive of students adopting a partisan identity.

Adolescence is a particularly influential time in the development of an individual's political identity. It is generally thought that political beliefs tend to crystalize during adolescence (Converse, 1969; Sears, 1983) and teenagers are likely to begin expressing partisan preferences (Jennings & Markus, 1984). Research indicates that environmental influences are significant in the types of political identities students develop. Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2013), for example, found that the pedagogical emphases of the school environment lead citizens to prefer differing types of political engagement. In their study, students who attended schools where controversial issues and current events were discussed tended to prefer engagement in electoral politics, such as volunteering for campaigns. Students whose schools emphasized community service and other forms of direct engagement, however, tended to prefer these forms of civic activity over more campaign-oriented activities. McDevitt and Kiousis (2007) also note that schools are not alone in influencing adolescent development. Discussions and learning

from school spill over into family and peer conversations. In McDevitt and Kiousis's research, family influence generally pushed students towards electoral participation while peer influence tended towards community activism.

Recent Trends in Young People's Political Participation

Research on young people's political development may give the impression that it follows a set, maturational pattern. It is important, however, to take cohort differences into account when studying the political development of young people. As noted above, young people's political identities and behaviors may be shaped by the political climate surrounding their development. Levendusky (2009) argues that young people are currently more likely to be politically polarized than previous generations on account of growing up in an era of contentious political discourse. Drawing on ANES data, Stoker and Jennings (2008) found individuals who came of age between 1996 and 2004 showed more issue constraint (alignment between issue positions and partisan identification) than previous generations did at the same age.

The polarized environment may also serve to disengage young people from politics. A 2013 report from the Committee on Youth Voting and Civic Engagement cited polarization as one of the largest threats to young people's political engagement. Some scholars, however, argue that political engagement among young people is not so much declining as it is shifting. Youth, while not voting or participating in electoral politics in large numbers, are more directly involved in their communities and in activism (Dalton, 2008; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). While some community service is due to school requirements or resume building, many students participate in

such activities out of genuine desire to make a positive difference (Jones & Hill, 2003). For students motivated by the latter, frustration with partisan politics may steer them towards community activism instead of political campaigns.

When young people engage in politics and political campaigns, much of that engagement happens in the digital realm. As the present study utilizes online deliberations, it is important understand some of the differences between politics in the online and face-to-face realms, especially among young people. A 2012 Pew Survey (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2012) found that, among social media users, younger people are far more likely to use the various platforms for political engagement (such as commenting on issues, posting political links, encouraging voting, etc.). There are important differences between deliberations that take place in the online and face-to-face worlds. Using survey data from individuals who had participated in both deliberative formats, Wojcieszak, Baek, and Delli Carpini (2009) found that online deliberations were perceived to be more diverse, but also more individualistic (meaning that individuals deliberating online may learn a lot, but are less focused on solving community problems). When discussing controversial issues in classrooms, there seems to be little difference in the quality of online or face-to-face deliberations (Guiller, Durndell, & Ross, 2008). In fact, online discussions in classrooms tend to have more equal levels of participation than face-to-face discussions, which can be dominated by more talkative students (Busbin, 2013; Larson, 2003).

Partisan Identities: Benefits and Drawbacks

Up to this point, I have discussed the evidence that suggests that some high school students may have partisan identities. In this section, I examine both positive and negative outcomes associated with partisanship identities and argue that they could impact students in the classroom and later in life.

Benefits of Partisanship

In many ways, partisans meet the criteria of informed engagement in politics. They are more likely to vote, donate money, and campaign for political candidates. There is also strong correlation between the strength of individuals' partisanship and their political knowledge and involvement (Abramowitz, 2010; Levendusky, 2009; Mutz, 2006). Given the benefits of partisanship on voter turnout, political knowledge, and overall political participation, some scholars in social studies have openly wondered whether social studies courses should actively encourage students to develop partisan identities. Hess and McAvoy (2014), for example, float the idea of encouraging partisanship as a way to get students more interested and involved in politics. In such a classroom, part of the teacher's role in political socialization would involve having students reflect on which political party best reflects their values and opinions. Evidence from multi-national studies supports the contention that partisanship is correlated with desirable behaviors. The 2009 study from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) found that liking a political party was correlated with students' intended political participation (Schulz et al., 2010). This correlation exists despite evidence that political parties are among the least trusted political institutions (Schulz et al., 2010; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2003).

Drawbacks of Partisanship

If voter turnout and political knowledge were the only measures of democratic citizenship, then partisanship would be unequivocally desirable in the eyes of social studies educators. Partisanship, however, is often associated with cognitive and social biases that fall short of the deliberative democratic model.

Motivated reasoning is a collection of processes that guide individuals' thinking, many of which take place outside of conscious awareness. As the name implies, these processes are driven by some motive, usually a particular belief or feeling driving individuals towards a particular conclusion. In a review of early research on biased reasoning processes, Kunda (1990) concludes that individuals without any substantial interest or knowledge about a particular issue can reason fairly evenhandedly, especially if they are encouraged to be accurate in their judgments. As Kunda notes, however, if individuals are motivated by prior opinions, partisan allegiances, personal friendships, moral convictions, or other such factors, these may push them towards one side of a given issue. In such cases, their reasoning serves more to rationally justify their existing conclusions than to evaluate alternatives. The motives that drive these biases often occur without individuals being aware of them. Lodge and Tabor (Lodge & Tabor, 2013; Tabor & Lodge, 2016) focus on the unconscious elements of motivated reasoning. According to their model, John Q. Public (JPQ), unconscious cues that occur early in the political thought process can direct conscious, explicit thinking in very profound ways. Lodge and Tabor argue that these subtle processes are often so powerful that explicit thoughts

individuals have about politics are often rationalizations of conclusions reached through entirely automatic processing.

As most motivated reasoning research is conducted on adults, it is legitimate to ask whether or not young people have enough experience with controversial social or political issues to have developed any directional motivated bias. Although few researchers have investigated biased thinking in K-12 students, their findings support the existence of motivated reasoning in young students. Klaczynski and colleagues (Klaczynski, 1997, 2000, 2001; Klaczynski & Gordon, 1996; Klaczynski, Gordon, & Fauth, 1997; Klaczyski & Narasimhan, 1998) have found that children from elementary through high school display a number of reasoning biases, many of which are driven by their prior beliefs on issues. Chief among their findings is that children, like adults, are prone to process information differently depending on how much they agree or disagree with it. Information that agrees with children's preexisting positions is generally accepted and not questioned, while counter-attitudinal information is carefully processed and discredited.

There is also a social component to biased reasoning. As Haidt (2012) notes, individuals often mistrust and discount messages coming from individuals perceived as different or part of an out-group. Attempts at discussing issues across ideological boundaries often fall flat because there is not sufficient social connection to overcome the ideological differences. Individuals whose ideas are critiqued by strangers or out-group members are likely to become defensive and disregard or actively resist the critique, regardless of its merit. Being critiqued by a friend, colleague, or other in-group member,

however, is a different experience. Because of the stronger social bonds present in the latter situation, the recipient of the critique is more likely to be receptive.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to build bonds across social and political difference. Some of that difficulty stems from basic social and economic forces. Bishop (2008) and Mutz (2006) note that a decades-long trend of demographic sorting has impacted the political landscape of the United States. As individuals move around the country, they tend to settle in neighborhoods among people similar to themselves. Although people's housing choices are usually not political, a consequence of the sorting process has been increased political homogeneity within communities. As Mutz (2006) argues, individuals in such communities will rarely have opportunities to encounter political difference. Individuals who are rarely exposed to political difference may have a difficult time imagining how reasonable people could disagree with their views. While the consistent reinforcement of a single political perspective is generally good for political engagement, it also tends to impede deliberative engagement across difference.

Media and technology also make it easier for individuals to seek reinforcement and avoid challenges to their political perspectives. Noting broad suspicion of media bias, Iyengar and Hahn (2009) find that partisans prefer news sources perceived as friendly (Fox News for Republicans, CNN and National Public Radio for Democrats) even for stories that were non-controversial or apolitical. Further, Levendusky (2013) finds that slanted media outlets tend to increase partisans' mistrust of the opposing party. Metzger, Hartsell, and Flanagin (2015) note that preferring partisan slanted news is likely rooted in

perceptions of out-party sources as less credible (as opposed to individuals wanting to avoid information that disagrees with their opinions).

Is it Possible to Have the Best of Both Worlds?

Given that social studies teachers tend to hold both engagement and open-mindedness as ideals, it is of interest whether there are circumstances under which individuals can enjoy the civic benefits of partisanship (increased information and engagement) without the drawbacks (bias, mistrust, and intellectual isolationism). Much of the literature reviewed thus far does not grant much hope for the ability to be openly deliberative about politics when strong identities are involved. Some literature, however, suggests that such engagement is possible.

Generally, the perception of information as an antidote to bias is not supported by political psychology. Studies have found, however, that there is a point when even a biased person can no longer ignore information that contradicts their beliefs. Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emerson (2010) found that individuals who supported a fictional candidate were resistant to changing their opinion when presented with negative information about that candidate. With continued exposure to negative information, many individuals initially resistant to opinion change later changed their candidate preference. Redlawsk et al. suggest that the cognitive resources needed to continually justify existing preferences in the face of negative information eventually deplete and individuals will adjust their preference. In short, it may be a difficult process, but it is possible to "wear down" individuals engaging in motivated reasoning or other forms of biased thinking about politics.

While Redlawsk and colleagues' experiment was conducted with a fictional campaign, Lavine, Johnstone, and Steenbergen (2012) present evidence that prolonged exposure to negative information may promote what they term *partisan ambivalence*. Ambivalent partisans are engaged voters who profess loyalty to a political party but do not exhibit the same partisan voting records that other party loyalists do. Using numerous large scale election studies, such as the ANES, Lavine et al. found that ambivalent behavior tends to rise in elections where a particular political party experiences a lot of negative press. For example, relatively close to the 2006 Congressional elections, the Republican Party was subject to a number of scandals, including financial malfeasance and sexual abuse of minors (Lavine et al., 2012). Combined with the unpopularity of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, many self-identified Republicans ended up voting Democrat or not voting at all, leading to large Democratic victories.

Discussion/Deliberation and Open-Minded Engagement

Advocates of deliberation as a means of democratic decision-making believe that the deliberative process represents the best and fairest process available. Decisions made through deliberation, so the theory goes, should be fairer and less prone to bias than other decisions. However, critics of deliberation, such as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), argue that deliberative exercises fall short of these idealistic predictions.

The outcomes of deliberation may be partially dependent on the participants themselves. Groups with uniform demographics or opinions may deliberate differently and have different results than those in heterogeneous groups. For example, Schkade, Sunstein, and Hastie (2007) note that uniform opinion groups have their opinions

reinforced and may even become more extreme as a result of deliberation. Ethnically homogenous groups may also have their own perspectives reinforced as a result of deliberations. Goldberg (2013) found that homogenous groups of Israeli students more strongly reinforced their own identities in a deliberation than did heterogeneous groups.

The evidence is more mixed when groups are not uniform. Some researchers find mixed-opinion groups do not polarize (e.g., Martin, Hewstone, Martin, & Gardikiotis, 2008), whereas others find the opposite (e.g., Gastil, Black, & Muscovitz, 2008). The relative strength of a given political opinion during a discussion/deliberation may also matter. Noelle-Neumann (1974) argues that individuals in the minority opinion may be subject to a *spiral of silence,* wherein the unpopular opinions are not voiced for fear of social repercussions. Later studies on spiral of silence (e.g., Hayes, Matthes, & Eveland Jr., 2011) indicate that hesitancy to express opinions is also a function of individual dispositions and strength of political opinion. Despite the mixed evidence, there is a consensus that individuals are impacted by group composition, though the nature of how group factors interact with individual factors is still uncertain.

Politics in the Classroom

Despite the view that student partisans are quite rare, it is common to view students as developing civic and political beings. As such, researchers often encourage the discussion of controversial political issues in the classroom. This section examines the literature on social studies pedagogy, classroom environment, and teacher's beliefs, focusing on potential applications to partisanship.

Pedagogical Choices

Classroom discussions[2] in social studies appear to be the most highly regarded vehicle for practicing democratic skills. Parker and Hess (2001) emphasize that good discussion results in deeper understanding of both the subject at hand and the process of generating shared knowledge. Such understandings come by exposing participants' views to examination by the group. While the precise format of a given discussion may vary, the process of group consideration of varying ideas remains central. Wilen (2003) delineates several qualities of discussion that are in direct alignment with democratic values, including being able to freely express ideas, problem solve, and disagree with prevailing opinions. Less explicitly, there is a preference for rational discourse, tolerance, and fairness present in most classroom discussions. In addition, many scholars recognize the need for balance between the freedom to express oneself openly and respect for others in the group.

Good discussion pedagogy pays dividends in terms of student knowledge and participation. A host of research indicates that students who discuss controversial issues in their classes show more political efficacy, interest, knowledge, trust, participation (both community and electoral), perspective taking, and tolerance (see, for example, Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013; Barr et al., 2015; Campbell, 2008; Conover & Searing, 2000; Hahn, 1998; Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Although these benefits are substantial, many of them are also correlated with increased partisan feeling

[2] The online discussions in this study are intended to be deliberative, though much of the literature on in Social Studies Education refers to discussion more broadly. As deliberation is a type of discussion, it can be assumed that the works discussed here are applicable to deliberations.

and behavior. As noted above, many of these behaviors ultimately end up being correlated with increased partisanship when measured in adults.

Clark and Avery (2016) call for further research examining the psychological elements of controversial issues discussion. Despite the benefits of discussions, few studies have distinguished between the desirable behaviors and processes that drive those behaviors. Taking voting as a basic example, the same action (casting a ballot) can be driven by vastly different motivations, some in alignment with democratic education's goals and some not. An individual, for example, could vote because they considered the issues and concluded that a particular candidate best represented their interest. Another individual could vote for that same candidate simply because that candidate represents the party their parents support. While both individuals have voted, many civic educators would place higher value on the actions of the former than of the latter. Research is needed to examine deeper cognitive, affective, and motivational elements of civic participation so as to better understand how they are impacted (or not) by education.

School/Classroom Environment

While pedagogy is important, the climate in which discussion takes place is equally important. Studies both within the United States and internationally conclude that open classroom climate for discussion is influential in promoting civic engagement and knowledge (Campbell, 2008; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Quintellier & Hooghe, 2013; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). An open climate for discussion includes, among other criteria, student comfort, exposure to multiple perspectives, and teacher encouragement of discussion.

As noted earlier, group composition is important. Diverse student groupings facilitate exposure to diverse perspectives. Goldberg's (2013) study of Israeli youth found that ethnically diverse groups expressed much broader historical perspectives after discussion than ethnically homogenous groups. Stoddard and Chen (2016) studied small groups of 18- to 22-year-olds discussing a film about Guantanamo Bay. They found that ideologically diverse discussion groups generally raised more issues and had deeper discussions than homogenous groups. In general, if teachers want to expose their students to more diverse viewpoints, purposefully selected groups tend to be better than student-selected groups.

Teacher Politics

Teachers have a right to their own political allegiances and judgments, though how much of either they should share with their students is debatable. Despite a general trend in the research favoring impartial teacher disclosure (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; James, 2009; Kelly, 1986), many studies document teachers' unwillingness to do so (Miller-Lane, 2006; Wilson, Hass, Laughlin, & Sunal, 2002). Teachers typically offer a variety of reasons for such reluctance, with fear of unduly influencing students' thinking and fear of community or administrative sanctions usually topping the list (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; McAvoy & Hess, 2013).

Naturally, there are many different ways to make one's political feelings known. Kelly (1986) outlines four stances that teachers typically take on opinion disclosure. *Exclusive neutrality* reflects a commitment to avoiding controversy at all cost. Such teachers will not disclose their beliefs and will avoid all issues that could spark

disagreement. *Exclusive partiality* is a commitment to teaching a certain perspective. These teachers will teach only what they perceive are the correct views on all controversial topics. Teachers who do not wish to disclose their views but want to tackle controversial issues favor *neutral impartiality*. In such classrooms, students are encouraged to express themselves and disagree with one another, but the teacher will carefully guard own their opinion. *Committed impartiality* involves making one's opinions known but also expressing a commitment to make sure all sides of an issue are heard. Most educational researchers view this last category as the best reflection of deliberative democratic ideals, though as noted earlier, many educators in the field commonly favor neutral impartiality for fear of exerting undue influence on students' judgments.

Not all means of disclosure, however, are intentional. Many times, teachers betray their political leanings through off-hand comments, actions, or reactions. For example, Niemi and Niemi (2007) observed teachers making comments that implied or directly stated opinions on political matters, despite professing a commitment to remain neutral and allow students to make up their own minds. James (2009) argues that even teachers careful about their comments can express bias. Regardless of whether teachers' beliefs are disclosed, they are expressed through choice of topics or instructional methods. In James' estimation, it is better for teachers to openly declare their positionality at the outset and allow students to openly question the beliefs that drive pedagogical choices. Similarly, Journell (2011, 2016) notes that teachers' decisions to include or omit certain

materials often reflect their political beliefs by unfairly balancing the information available for student consideration.

Previous civic education research on teacher disclosure generally focuses on teacher choices and students' stated responses to those choices. While there is recognition that teachers can express bias in subtle ways, there has been little discussion about the ways in which students could potentially respond to disclosure with bias of their own. Though teachers may fear influencing students, this view neglects that many students come into the classroom already having formed political identities. Research on college students indicates that student political identity can profoundly shape how they react to teacher political disclosure. Work by Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2008) and Weiler (2009) indicates a relationship between college students' and professors' differences in political beliefs and subsequent course evaluations. A key finding of this research is that students who perceive large gaps between the professor and themselves in terms of partisanship report less motivation and learning in the class. In other words, the stakes surrounding differences between teacher and student political identities could potentially be quite high.

Summary and Gaps in the Literature

In this section, I have reviewed the normative literature about citizenship and deliberative democracy, as well as the role of education in facilitating engaged and thoughtful citizenship in students. I have also identified the importance of student identity in shaping educational experiences. Partisan identity, despite being relatively under-researched in social studies education, may constitute a salient social identity for

students, which in turn may influence their behavior and perceptions of the classroom. Lastly, I reviewed the literature on discussion, classroom climate, and opinion disclosure in social studies classrooms to identify ways in which political opinions/discussions impact student political socialization.

Despite all the research on the relationship between civic education and citizenship, very little research has examined the differences between partisan and non-partisan students (for exceptions, see Hess & McAvoy, 2014; 2015). Differences between partisan and non-partisan adults have been extensively explored in political science/political psychology literature, but there is relatively little research examining whether these differences manifest themselves in young people who are still developing physically, emotionally, and politically.

Moving beyond baseline differences, little is known about how partisanship impacts the nature of student discussions and deliberations. Again, extensive research on adults indicates that they are susceptible to numerous biases (such as motivated reasoning) when discussing politics, but the deliberative literature has produced mixed results regarding the impacts of group political composition. Research on discussions involving homogenous and heterogeneous groups in the classroom (Goldberg, 2013) suggests that there are differences between the two, though more research is needed to examine these differences in discussions of political controversies. Further, deeper examination of constructs such as polarization and motivated reasoning is needed to determine whether these tendencies, which largely run contrary to expectations of good

citizens (see Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011), can be moderated by teachers' pedagogical choices.

Lastly, as partisanship often constitutes a lens through which individuals view social and political topics, the impact of partisanship on the classroom experience as a whole merits investigation. Research on teacher disclosure of political opinions at the high school level generally favors open disclosure with a commitment to neutrality. Deeper understanding of the specific cognitive and social impacts that teacher political opinions have on students is needed.

In short, as Clark and Avery (2016) note, the influence of partisanship and political disagreement may run deeper than social studies educators realize. In response to the gaps in the literature, I focus my inquiry on the following four research questions:

R1: Are partisan students different from their non-partisan peers in terms of political and civic knowledge, sense of civic efficacy, and perceptions of the classroom environment (e.g., climate for discussion, perceptions of classmates, and teacher opinion)?

R2: Do partisan students behave differently than their non-partisan peers in the context of small group deliberations? Does the composition of deliberative groups (e.g., partisan unanimity, presence of non-partisan members, presence of disagreeing partisans) moderate these behaviors?

R3: Are partisan and non-partisan students impacted differently by deliberation? Specifically, are changes in sense of civic efficacy, opinions about political groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), or issue opinions different between

partisans and non-partisans? Does deliberative group composition moderate these changes?

R4: Does the strength of students' partisanship influence the degree to which they consider differing opinions or opposing arguments?

The study described in the next chapter serves to expand the knowledge base in social studies about partisan students and suggest pedagogical strategies that maximize the civic benefits to these students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I reviewed literature relevant to student partisanship and classroom discussion and identified four lines of inquiry. In this chapter, I describe a study of student partisanship in the context of an online deliberation, the results of which will be reported in later chapters.

Research Questions

Research in social studies education often emphasizes the importance of controversial issues discussions in promoting better educational and civic outcomes (e.g., higher levels of political knowledge and civic self-efficacy). Social Studies scholars have only recently begun to recognize the influence of political partisanship and strong political opinions on such discussions and the larger classroom environment (Hess & McAvoy, 2014, 2015; McAvoy & Hess, 2013). While these studies have made important contributions to understanding social studies education in divided political times, much work remains to fully understand how students' partisanship (or lack thereof) impacts their civic education. In order to more fully explore the issue of student partisanship and its influence on discussions and deliberations, I conducted a study of student deliberations in online forums. In the course of this study, I pursued the following research questions:

R1: Are partisan students different from their non-partisan peers in terms of political and civic knowledge, sense of political efficacy, and perceptions of the

classroom environment (e.g., climate for discussion, perceptions of classmate and teacher opinion)?

R2: Do partisan students behave differently than their non-partisan peers in the context of small group deliberations? Does the composition of deliberative groups (e.g., partisan unanimity or non-unanimity) moderate these behaviors?

R3: Are partisan and non-partisan students impacted differently by deliberation? Specifically, are changes in sense of political efficacy, opinions about political groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), or issue opinions different between partisans and non-partisans? Does deliberative group composition moderate these changes?

R4: Does the strength of students' partisanship influence the degree to which they consider differing opinions or opposing arguments?

Research Question 1

Research on adults suggests that partisans tend to differ in many ways from non-partisans. Partisan adults, likely due to their greater engagement and interest in political matters, consistently demonstrate higher levels of political knowledge than comparable groups (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Galston, 2001, Hess & McAvoy, 2014). It is expected that partisan high school students will also be more engaged with political information than their peers. Given partisans' higher levels of political involvement, it is also likely that they will exhibit a greater sense that their participation matters and is capable of impacting society (political efficacy). Thus:

H1a: Students with partisan identities will have significantly higher political and civic knowledge than their non-partisan peers.

H1b: Students with partisan identities will have significantly higher levels of political efficacy than their non-partisan peers.

Classrooms are complex social spaces where individuals of different backgrounds interact. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) predicts that individuals with salient social identities will seek to distinguish their group from others (either through elevating their own group or disparaging other groups). If a partisan student perceives their teacher or other students as members of an in-group or out-group, it may impact their perceptions of the classroom climate as well. As Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2008) found, the greater differences perceived between their own partisan allegiances and those of their classmates and teachers (*partisan distance*), the lower their ratings of the teacher, class, and classmates.

H1c: There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/classmate partisan distance and perception of open classroom climate.

H1d: There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/teacher partisan distance and perception of open classroom climate.

H1e: There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/teacher partisan distance and positive course evaluations.

Research Question 2

The environment in which a deliberation takes place can influence individual deliberative behaviors. Research on spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974)

indicates that individuals may be reluctant to speak up in discussions if they perceive their opinion to be in the minority. Perception of the group opinion climate will likely be based off of group feedback to each member's contributions. It is likely that members of the group will decide to adjust their contributions (or not) based on such feedback and the cycle will repeat. Figure 3.1 illustrates the process.

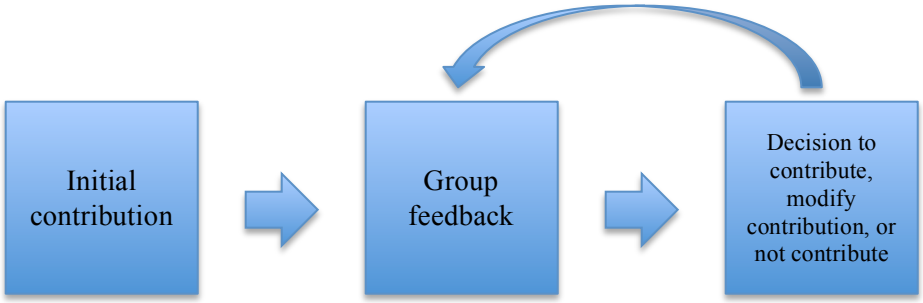

Figure 3.5. Student adaptation to group opinion climate.

It is likely partisans, responding to cues about the opinion climate from their group mates, will adjust their levels of partisan opinion expression and participation over the course of the deliberation. Therefore:

H2: There will be an interaction between students' strength of partisanship and their group condition (uniform or mixed) when predicting discussion behaviors.

Research Question 3

Civic educators have consistently found that deliberation and other forms of discussion have the impact of raising civic efficacy and participation (Galston, 2001; Hess & McAvoy, 2014), but little research in K-12 education has examined changes in opinion strength or affective polarization (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012) as a result of deliberation.

H3a: Students' political efficacy should increase following the deliberative exercise, regardless of partisanship.

H3b: Partisan students will become more extreme in their opinions following deliberation, as compared to non-partisan students.

H3c: Partisan students will become more affectively polarized following deliberation, as compared to non-partisan students.

The composition of the discussion group may impact how much opinion and identity affirmation students receive. Exposure to diverse perspectives tends to promote less opinion certainty (Mutz, 2006). It is likely that the discussion condition will moderate the extent to which students have their opinions and identities affirmed. Figure 3.2 illustrates the hypothesized moderating relationship for both opinions and partisan identity.

H3d: Deliberation condition (uniform or mixed) will moderate the changes described in H3b and H3c.

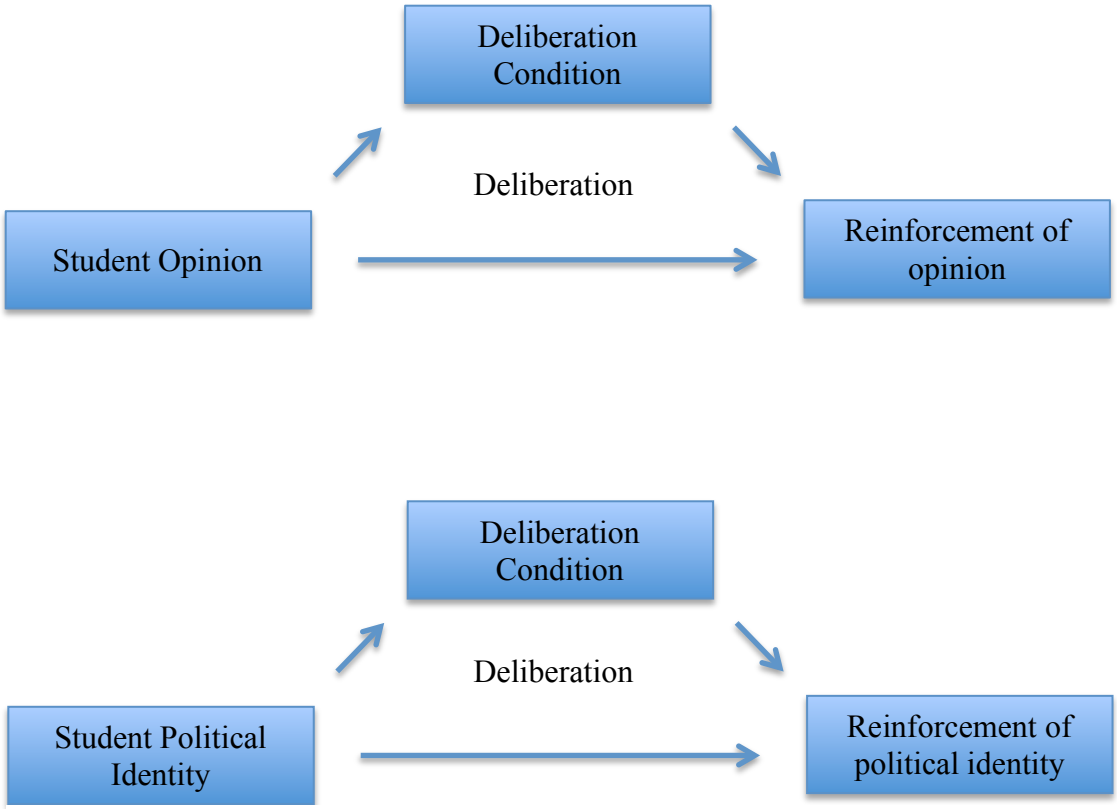

Figure 3.6. Moderating impact of deliberation condition on reinforcement of opinions and political identity.

Research Question 4

As much as students are exhorted to be aware of their own biases when considering information, much research (e.g., Klaczynski, 2000; Lodge & Tabor, 2013; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979) suggests that genuine neutrality is difficult to achieve. Biased assimilation of information is a significant component of such subjective thinking. When individuals encounter information, they tend to discount or seek to refute arguments and ideas in opposition to their current position and pay more attention to information that supports it. In other words, political identity may act as a filter, directing student thinking about information they receive (see Figure 3.3).

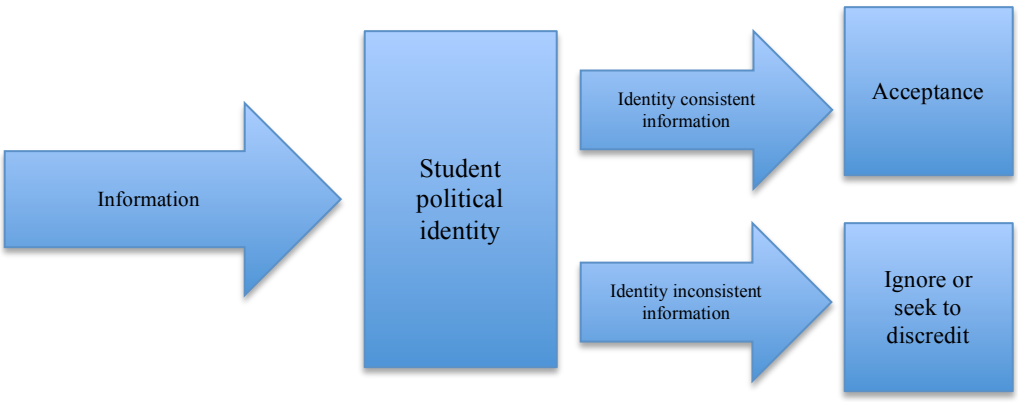

Figure 7.3. Political identity acting as an informational filter.

Research on biased assimilation suggests that, after students gather information on a topic, partisan students will likely have an imbalance of information in support of their chosen side. Non-partisan or independent students would be expected to be more even-handed in their information acquisition. Therefore:

H4a: Partisan students will exhibit a significantly higher argument repertoire score than non-partisan students prior to discussion.

H4b: Partisan students will be significantly less likely to incorporate new information into their understanding of the issue following deliberation than non-partisan students.

H4c: Partisan students will be less likely to recall information that supports an opposing side of the issue at the end of the term.

Study Setting and Participants

The population of interest for this study is high school seniors (17- to 18-year-olds). Research suggests that the development of political and partisan identity usually begins during the teenage years (Converse, 1969; Jennings & Markus, 1984). High school seniors are more likely to have developed partisan identities than younger high

school students. In the state where the research takes place, it is typical for 12th graders to take economics and/or government courses during their senior year.

In selecting participating schools, I relied on a professional network of educators within the state where the research takes place. Leaders of professional organizations and connections at the University of Minnesota recommended educators in the state that typically use deliberations of controversial issues, or would be interested in incorporating them into the curriculum. Based on these recommendations, I approached potential teachers to describe the study and began the process of securing permission to conduct research in their schools. Due to the focus of this study, the relative amount of political diversity found in a given school was the primary consideration in selecting school sites. Schools where very little difference of political opinion could be expected were excluded.

Three teachers agreed to participate in the study, though one site had to be dropped because I was unable to secure permission from the school district to conduct research in that classroom. The two remaining sites, Loomis High School and Nichols High School, were both located in rural communities. At Loomis High School, I observed two sections of a course called Democratic Citizenship taught by Ms. Albertson. At Nichols High School, three sections of an AP Government course taught by Mr. Humphries participated in the study.

Loomis High School is located in community of roughly 5,000 residents about an hour's drive from a major metropolitan area in the Midwest. The school has approximately 850 students. The vast majority of the student body is White (97%). Ms. Albertson, who identifies as a White female, has been teaching for 23 years and has

taught the Democratic Citizenship course for the past five years. Democratic Citizenship is an elective course focused on the major issues of citizenship and governance in the United States. The course frequently features discussions of works by major figures in United States history. These works are often related to current events in the class and students often watched CNN Student News at the beginning of the hour. Two sections of this course, totaling 47 students, participated in the study.

Nichols High School is located in a county seat of approximately 24,000 people. The student body numbers about 1,400 and consists of 65% White, 22% Hispanic, 8% Black, 6% Asian. Mr. Humphries is a White male who has been teaching for 25 years, the last 13 of which he has spent teaching the AP Government classes that participated in this study (79 students). In addition to his responsibilities at the high school, he teaches at a local community college where he is the department chair.

Prior to beginning the online discussion, I visited both participating classrooms to explain the study and answer any student questions. During these visits, I observed classroom climates and procedures and familiarized myself with the classroom and school environment. I was also able to address any implementation issues, and hopefully, increase student enthusiasm for the project. At both sites, the study took place between August and November of 2016 and wrapped up prior to Election Day 2016.

Table 3.1 provides a breakdown of the students participating in the study. The two sites provided the desired diversity of political identification among students, though there are low levels of ethnic/racial diversity. The limitations of the sample will be discussed further below.

Table 3.1

Sample Characteristics (n = 126)

School	
Loomis	47
Nichols	79
Gender	
Male	51
Female	75
Race/Ethnicity	
White	108
Hispanic	6
Asian/Pacific Islander	1
Multi-Racial/Multi-Ethnic	3
Did Not Disclose	8
Political Affiliation	
Republican	40
Democrat	48
Independent	19
Other/Did Not Disclose	19

Procedure

As part of an assignment in their classes, students researched a controversial political issue and participated in an online discussion in small groups. In addition to that assignment, all students completed three questionnaires (Q1 prior to deliberation, Q2 after deliberation, and Q3 two weeks later) and purposefully selected students were asked to participate in follow-up interviews. Using the questionnaires, transcripts from the online deliberations, and interview data, I will assess the impacts of partisanship (or lack thereof) on students in social studies classrooms.

Pre-Discussion

Students were assigned a controversial topic ("Stop and Frisk" policies at Loomis High School and raising taxes at Nichols High School) and given class time to conduct research. Prior to their deliberations, students took Q1 (see below), providing baseline

measures of political efficacy, issue opinion, opinions on politics in general, and background information on the student (demographics, previous experiences in social studies classes, etc.). Based on their responses to political opinion questions, I assigned them to small discussion groups of three or four students using stratified random sampling. Some students were placed in mixed-partisanship groups, while others were placed in uniform partisan identity groups (all Republicans, all Democrats, or all Independents). Each participating school conducted separate deliberations and students were assigned to groups within their own school, though not necessarily within their own class period.

During Discussion

Students participated in an asynchronous online discussion using a threaded forum. Deliberations took place over the course of approximately one week. During that time, students were instructed to present information and explore the different options available (e.g., What do we know about the issue? What are the perspectives of various groups? What solutions have been proposed already?). Students were also asked to post, at minimum, one main thread and one reply to another student's thread.

Post-Discussion

Following the discussion, students took Q2. Additionally, 11 students were selected for interviews about their experiences in the deliberation and in the classroom in general. These students were purposefully selected to include a variety of perspectives from each discussion condition as well as a balance of gender, ethnic, and partisan groups. Because deliberative experiences can be shaped by both the individual (identity,

prior experiences, etc.) and social context (deliberative condition, level of agreement with the group, etc.) purposeful selection of participants was preferred over random selection for comparison over a broader range of experiences. Participating students were interviewed individually with 8 students being interviewed in a face-to-face setting and, due to scheduling difficulties, another two interviewed over Skype. One student was invited and initially accepted an interview invitation, but ultimately decided not to participate. All interviews were recorded for later transcription and coding.

Follow-Up

Two weeks after their discussion, students were asked to complete Q3 (see below). This final questionnaire once again measured political efficacy, issue opinion, and thoughts on politics, as well as students' perceptions of their classmates and teacher.

Measures/Data Sources

Student Questionnaires

The questionnaires provide a means of gathering information about students' demographic and educational backgrounds, as well as the opportunity to capture changes in several key measures over the course of the deliberative experience. Below is a description of the construct measures in the questionnaires. The specific wording of all of the items below can be found in Appendix A.

Outcome variables. The following variables will serve as statistical outcomes in the data analysis.

Political efficacy (Q1, Q2, Q3). Political efficacy reflects individuals' sense of whether their participation matters and whether they are able to have an impact on the

world around them (e.g., People like me don't have any say about what the government does.). Variations of this scale are used in both political science and civic education research. In the questionnaires used for this study, students respond to eight statements using a 7-point (strongly agree-strongly disagree scale) Likert scale. Higher scores are typically associated with higher levels of voting and political engagement. It is common to divide political efficacy into internal efficacy ($\alpha = .88$) and external efficacy ($\alpha = .76$) to assess the degree to which students feel they comprehend politics and are able to influence political events, respectively (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991; Levy, 2011).

Political and civic knowledge (Q1). The knowledge battery consists of seven questions modeled after work by Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996). Five questions cover basic civic and political knowledge (e.g., Which political party is more conservative at the national level? What size majority in both houses of Congress is needed to override a presidential veto?). The remaining two questions cover current political events and, as the study took place in an election year, asked about developments in the presidential campaign that occur close to the start of the study. Political and civic knowledge questions are often averaged into a scale (e.g., Capella, Price, & Nir, 2002) to represent participants' general level of political understanding ($\alpha = .82$).

Classroom climate scale (Q1). The open classroom scale (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, Schultz, 2001) captures the degree to which students feel comfortable expressing their opinions in the classroom. Students respond to six statements about their classroom on a 1-5 Likert scale (e.g., Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds.). Open classroom climate ($\alpha = .83$) has been frequently used in international

civics assessments (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010) and has been shown to be associated with student willingness to participate in discussions as well as student achievement in civics.

Perceptions of classmates and teacher (Q3). Student partisanship may impact how they perceive others in the classroom, particularly the teacher and other students. In studies at the college level, students who perceive differences between themselves and their professors typically give lower course evaluations and report less engagement and learning (Kelly-Woessner & Woessner, 2008). Students completed a 15-question course evaluation form asking them to evaluate their course and teacher (e.g., How would you rate your teacher's knowledge of the course material? Overall, I would recommend this course to other students.) The evaluation form was divided into two scales: evaluation of the teacher ($\alpha = .86$) and evaluation of the course ($\alpha = .78$). Students also placed their teachers and their classmates on both partisan (Republican/Democrat) and ideological (conservative/liberal) scales.

Perceived disagreement and opinion change (Q2). Two questions have been used by Wojcieszak (2011) to measure the impacts of perceived disagreement on opinion polarization. The perceived disagreement question asks students to mark (in 10% time increments) how often they found themselves disagreeing with their group. Students self-assessed whether their opinion changed during the course of the deliberation. Students mark their opinion movement on a scale, marking the left side of the scale if they moved away from their previous stance and the right side of the scale of if their opinion was

reinforced or strengthened. Students whose opinions were not changed mark the middle of the scale.

Affective polarization (Q1, Q2, Q3). Students rated political groups (Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals) using a feeling thermometer. Each group is given a 0 to 100 rating, with lower scores representing negative feelings and higher scores representing positive feelings. Differences in student ratings of Republicans/Democrats and conservatives/liberals can be used as a measure of affective polarization (Iyengar et al., 2012). Students with a large difference between their preferred political party or ideological group (if they have one) and the other party can be said to be more affectively polarized than students with small differences between their ratings. This measure was tracked over the course of the deliberative exercise to determine whether deliberation across the various grouping conditions impacts affect towards political out-groups.

Argument repertoire (Q1, Q2, Q3). Argument repertoire (Capella, Prince, Nir, 2002) captures both student issue opinion and their ability to present arguments both for and against their position. The measure asks students to state their position and up to six reasons that support that position. They were then asked to state up to six reasons a person who disagreed with their position would give. The measure serves as an assessment of student learning throughout the course of the deliberation process. In addition, comparing the number of reasons a student gives for and against their position measures the degree to which they engaged in biased assimilation of information (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979).

Predictor/control variables. The following measures were included on the questionnaires to serve as predictors or statistical controls during data analysis.

Student partisanship and political orientation (Q1, Q2, Q3). Students placed themselves on 7-point party (Strong Republican-Strong Democrat) and ideology (Strongly conservative-Strongly liberal) scales. In the case of partisan identification, students' responses to two questions determined their placement on the 7-point partisan scale. The first question asked whether they identify as Republican, Independent, Democrat, or another party. Students marking the first three options received a question asking whether they consider themselves a strong or not very strong partisan (for Republicans and Democrats) or whether they lean towards one party or another (for Independents). These scales are then collapsed to create measures of party and ideological strength ranging from 0-3 (e.g., Strong Republicans and Strong Democrats coded as 3 on a party strength measure, moderate liberals and conservatives coded as 2 on the ideological strength measure).

Partisan social identity (Q1, Q2, Q3). Based on student responses to their partisan affiliation, they received a list of questions asking how strongly they identify with their party of choice (Republican, Democrat, or Independent). These seven questions provide an indication of how strongly a student's partisan identity influences their self-concept (Huddy, Mason, Aarøe, 2015). Students responded on a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 4 (A great deal), creating a score from 7-28. The responses were summed to create scales for Republicans ($\alpha = .91$), Democrats ($\alpha = .89$), and Independents ($\alpha = .90$).

Civic education experiences index (Q1). This index is adapted from a survey conducted by the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Engagement (2013). It consists of six questions (α = .74) that ask about students' prior educational experiences with discussion pedagogy, service projects, or other forms of quality civic learning. As higher amounts of quality civic education experiences are correlated with desirable civic behaviors, such as increased participation and informed voting (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013; Kawashima-Ginsberg & Levine, 2014), it is important to control for students' prior educational experiences when examining their discussion behaviors. Also, the relationship between quality civic education pedagogies and the development of partisanship is largely unexplored. Prior civic experiences may prove influential in the strength of partisan belief and/or polarization.

School democratic climate (Q1). This measure indicates the degree to which students feel their voice is heard in the school at large. It consists of four questions (α = .73) measuring whether students feel that they can influence decisions at their school, whether students are free to disagree with teachers, and whether they are part of a caring community.

Community and school participation (Q1). The community (seven questions, α = .62) and school (five questions, α = .70) participation indices measure student involvement in activities both in and out of school. Both of these indices are adapted from the IEA questionnaires (Schulz et al., 2010). Activity involvement is generally correlated with students' civic involvement later in life.

Parental and peer discussion (Q1). Parents are very influential in the civic development of young people and often, whether implicitly or explicitly, pass on their political habits and leanings to their children. Peers, too, are important in the political development of young people. Peer social networks serve to encourage political identification and involvement (Sinclair, 2012). These two questions, adapted from the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge questionnaire (2013) asked how often students discuss politics or social issues with their parents/guardians and peers.

Perceived political polarization (Q1, Q2, Q3). Perceived political polarization measures the degree to which students perceive divisions between the two major political parties. Students responded to three questions ($\alpha = .78$) about their perceptions of partisan differences in ideology and how they think the parties feel about one another (e.g., Do you feel that Republicans and Democrats trust each other?). The public often perceives more ideological polarization among politicians than there actually is (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2015), though little research has addressed whether these misperceptions exist among high school students. Controlling for perceived polarization will reduce the chance that changes in student affective polarization following deliberation will be attributable to students' perceptions of politics outside of the deliberation.

Demographic controls (Q1). Students will be asked to identify their gender (male, female, other), race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (using the IEA study proxy of number of books in the home – see Schulz et al., 2010). There may be important differences in political behavior at a young age among demographic groups. For example, Hooghe and Stolle (2004) identify differences in intended political expression among

boys and girls, with boys being more likely to anticipate joining a political party and support more radical forms of political action. In order to see if the impact of other predictor variables is different across demographic groups, interaction terms were tested in the models as necessary.

Discussion Forum Posts

Although most student deliberations take place face-to-face within the classroom, political learning and communication increasingly takes place online, especially among young people. Online forums were chosen for this study because they offer similar quality to face-to-face discussions (Guiller, Durndell, & Ross, 2008), provide safer environments for participation and opinion expression (Busbin, 2013; Clark, Bordwell, & Avery, 2015; Ho & McLeod, 2008), and represent a relatively understudied aspect of student discussions.

I worked with the teachers in each school to determine a discussion topic that would fit with their curriculums and was relevant to the political climate at the time of the study (see Appendix B). In the case of Loomis High School, Ms. Albertson and I settled on the topic of "Stop and Frisk" policies, given that it connected with their study of rights in class and had been a topic at one of the 2016 presidential debates. The specific prompt for discussion was *"*Stop and Frisk should be adopted nationwide as a means of reducing crime." At Nichols High School, the government course was studying the structures of government and the issues of taxation and income inequality were prominent features of the 2016 presidential campaign. Mr. Humphries and I settled on the prompt, "Taxes

should be raised to more evenly distribute income and better fund government programs."

Student posts in the online deliberation forum were archived and coded using a scheme adapted from Stromer-Galley (2007). The rationale for choosing this scheme is that it allows for assessing deliberation through both the group and individual lenses. Coding took place in two stages. Stage one coded each contribution from the speaker (in the case of the present research, a post or reply to the deliberative forum) in terms of four categories: problem, meta-talk, process, and social. *Problem talk* reflects students' consideration of the topic and can be subdivided into questions, opinions, agreements, disagreements, and factual statements. *Meta-talk* refers to attempts to summarize or characterize the content of the deliberation and includes statements of consensus ("It seems we all agree that…"), conflict ("We still can't agree on…"), and clarification. *Process comments* express participants' thoughts on either the online environment or the deliberative process in general. Such comments could praise or criticize the activity or raise technical issues with forum. Lastly, *social talk*, designed to build community, consists of greetings, goodbyes, apologies, praise, and other similar talk.

In stage two of the coding, each instance of the four was broken down into specific types of contributions. For example, a typical student problem talk statement could read: "I disagree with Dan. Previous minimum wage hikes haven't resulted in huge reductions in the number of jobs." This statement, though two sentences, would be coded as a single thought in Stromer-Galley's scheme because the two sentences are directed to a previous point made by Dan. As the statement discusses the issue (income inequality),

it would be coded in stage one as problem talk. During stage two, it would be further divided into a disagreement and a factual statement. Table 3.2 provides examples of problem talk statements coded from the two discussions.

Table 3.2

Examples of Problem Talk Statements Coded Using Stromer-Galley's Coding Scheme

Statement	**Coding**
"I completely agree with you. Only people who have something they're hiding would be offended about the searching."	Problem Talk: Agreement; Argumentation
"Another study wrote that of the people who were stopped, 90% of them were Black or Latino. And of that 90%, 88% had done nothing wrong."	Problem Talk: Supporting Fact
"…your GPA is in the top third…of all GPA's. Now imagine if you were required to forfeit a portion of the GPA you have earned so that it could be given to a student on the bottom end of the spectrum. Would you be pleased to use this adjusted GPA for college applications and scholarships?"	Problem Talk: Argumentation
"I believe that taxes should be raised to benefit citizens and the community. Although I think that raise in taxes should be targeted more towards the wealthier people."	Problem Talk: Opinion

Following coding, statements of each type were tallied both at the individual and group levels. For the individual level, each participant has a tally of specific types of comments (opinions, arguments, questions, factual statements,

agreements/disagreements, etc.) as well as a tally of each broader category (problem talk, meta-talk, etc.).

Student Interviews

Following the completion of the online deliberation and the administration of Q2, roughly 10% of the students who took the surveys were selected for follow-up interviews (11 students). Data from the interviews helped elaborate upon data from the questionnaires as well as provide additional details about the student political deliberations unable to be captured via survey.

Interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix C) and focused on students' experiences during the deliberation as well as their feelings about politics and political discussion in general (e.g., "Tell me more about what you were thinking when you wrote this post. How comfortable were you sharing your ideas with the group? How do you feel about politics/politicians/political parties?"). Following transcription of the interviews, I used a grounded-theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to code the data. An initial open coding phase was used to identify key themes and ideas expressed by students. These themes were then organized and potential relationships among the data, both quantitative and qualitative, were explored. The data from the interviews was triangulated with data from student questionnaires and deliberation posts to reinforce or revise the interpretation of student experiences during the deliberative exercise.

Teacher Questionnaire

The teacher questionnaires asked questions about typical pedagogies employed in the classroom as well as capture the teachers' views on politics, discussion of politics in

the classroom, and political partisanship. Data from this questionnaire provided insight into the classroom environment as well as interesting context to student perceptions of the classroom.

Data Analysis

A summary of the hypotheses and research questions can be found in Tables 3.3 – 3.6.

Table 3.3

Description of Research Question 1, Associated Hypotheses, and Relevant Measures

Research Question	Hypotheses	Measures
R1: Are partisan students different from their non-partisan peers in terms of political and civic knowledge, sense of civic efficacy, and perceptions of the classroom environment?	*H1a:* Students with partisan identities will have significantly higher political and civic knowledge than their non-partisan peers. *H1b:* Students with partisan identities will have significantly higher political efficacy than their non-partisan peers. *H1c:* There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/classmate partisan distance and perception of open classroom climate. *H1d:* There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/teacher partisan distance and perception of open classroom climate. *H1e:* There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/teacher partisan distance and positive course evaluations.	*H1a:* Political and civic knowledge scale *H1b*: Political efficacy scale *H1c:* Classroom climate scale; perceptions of classmates; partisan and ideological self-placements *H1d:* Classroom climate scale; perceptions of teacher; partisan and ideological self-placements (both teacher and student). *H1e:* Perceptions of classroom and teacher.

Research Question 1

The first research question and its attendant hypotheses address baseline differences between partisan and non-partisan students. Using a series of regression analyses, I examined partisan identity strength as a key predictor of students' civic knowledge, civic efficacy, and classroom environment.

H1a and H1b were tested using multivariate regressions, controlling for demographic and educational experiences. Civic knowledge and civic efficacy served as outcome variables in a separate regression analyses. The focal predictor in both analyses is strength of partisan identity, which was created from students' responses to the partisan identity strength scale. H1a and H1b will be supported if the strength of partisanship predictor carries a positive regression coefficient.

H1c-H1e was tested using the partisan distance variable. Partisan distance is calculated by assigning a 1-7 numeric score to points on the partisan placement scale (Strong Republican = 1, Strong Democrat = 7), subtracting the students' placement from their perception of the teacher or classmates, and taking the absolute value. The resulting score serves as a focal predictor in a regression model. H1c and H1d are tested using a single model, using perception of open classroom climate as the outcome variable and partisan distance for the teacher and classmates as predictors. In both cases, partisan distance was expected to have a negative regression coefficient, indicating that as a student perceives greater political differences between themselves and others in the classroom, they will perceive the classroom climate as less open.

Models testing H1e again used the partisan distance variables as predictors, this time with student ratings of the course and teacher as outcome variables. H1e predicts that the regression coefficients for partisan distance should be negative, indicating that students who perceive political disagreement with their teachers should rate those teachers lower on evaluations of teaching.

Table 3.4

Description of Research Question 2, Associated Hypotheses, and Relevant Measures

Research Question	Hypothesis	Measures
R2: Do partisan students behave differently than their non-partisan peers in the context of small group deliberations? Does the composition of deliberative groups (mixed vs. uniform) moderate these behaviors?	*H2:* There will be a significant interaction between students' strength of partisanship and their group condition (mixed vs. uniform) when predicting deliberative behaviors, such as stating opinions or asking questions.	*H2:* Partisan and ideological self-placements; deliberative forum posts.

Research Question 2

R2 focuses on the behavior of students within the deliberation exercise and questions whether students' partisanship predicts the type and amount of contributions students make to the online forum. Using the tallies of student deliberative behaviors from the forum transcripts, I examine if the behaviors of students in the varied conditions (uniform or mixed). Student interview comments about their experience with the discussion group provide context and depth to the statistical analysis.

H2 suggests that there will be a statistical interaction between students' partisan identity strength and their discussion condition. Utilizing deliberative condition as a categorical variable and setting an interaction term between condition and partisan identity strength, I ran a series of regression models on each of the deliberative behaviors tallied in the coding process. The interaction term is expected to be significant. In other words, a partisan student's behavior may vary depending on the environment in which they discuss. For example, a student in the minority condition with strong partisan leanings may feel obligated to defend their point of view while a less stringently partisan student in the same condition may feel silenced by being in the minority. Because the

research on strength of opinion and deliberative behaviors is so mixed, it is reasonable to expect an interaction between partisan strength and deliberation condition, though the particular manifestation of that interaction is difficult to anticipate.

Given that students are nested in groups over the course of their deliberation, it may be appropriate to examine the data using a multi-level model design. Fully unconditional models of each outcome (models with no predictors) were constructed to determine whether sufficient variance exists between groups to warrant a multi-level model. Even if a multi-level model is appropriate, there may be a concern with the relatively small sample size involved in the study. Depending on the complexity of the models needed to analyze the data, there may not be sufficient degrees of freedom to utilize a multi-level design (I will discuss this further in later chapters).

Table 3.5

Description of Research Question 3, Associated Hypotheses, and Relevant Measures

Research Question	**Hypotheses**	**Measures**
R3: Are partisan and non-partisan students impacted differently by deliberation? Specifically, are changes in sense of political efficacy, opinions about political groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), or issue opinions different between partisans and non-partisans? Does deliberative group composition moderate these changes?	*H3a:* Students' political efficacy should increase following the deliberative exercise, regardless of partisanship. *H3b:* Partisan students will become more extreme in their opinions following deliberation, as compared to non-partisan students. *H3c:* Partisan students will become more affectively polarized following deliberation, as compared to non-partisan students. *H3d:* Deliberation condition (mixed vs. uniform) will moderate the changes described in H3b and H3c.	*H3a:* Political efficacy scale (pre- & post-deliberation). *H3b*: Perceived disagreement and opinion change measures; partisan and ideological self-placement. *H3c*: Affective polarization measure (pre- & post-deliberation); partisan and ideological self-placement. *H3d:* No additional measures

Research Question 3

In order to test the outcomes of deliberation relative to political partisanship, a series of regression models were fit for pre-and post-deliberation outcomes of political efficacy, issue opinion, and affective polarization. H3a can be tested with a multiple regression model, using the difference in political efficacy measured on pre- and post-deliberation questionnaires. Positive differences would indicate an increase in sense of efficacy following deliberation. Using the differences in efficacy as an outcome, a regression model controls for differences among students to determine whether there was a universal increase in efficacy or whether changes are specific to certain groups.

H3b was tested using the self-report measure of opinion change found on Q2. Using the opinion change measure, a regression model was used to assess the impact of partisanship on perceived changes of individual opinion. A positive relationship between opinion change and strength of partisanship would provide support for H3b, indicating that the partisans are more likely to strengthen their opinions following deliberation.

H3c was tested using the difference between pre- and post-deliberation affective polarization scores as an outcome in a regression model. A positive change in affective polarization score would indicate that the individual became more affectively polarized (either by decreasing their rating of the out-party, raising their rating of the in-party, or both). A positive relationship between partisan strength and the change in affective polarization will indicate support for the hypothesis.

H3d was tested by including an interaction term between partisan identity strength and discussion condition to the models for H3b and H3c. Significant interaction terms

would indicate that impact of partisanship is different depending on the deliberative environment.

Table 3.6

Description of Research Question 4, Associated Hypotheses, and Relevant Measures

Research Question	Hypotheses	Measures
R4: Does the strength of students' partisanship influence the degree to which they consider differing opinions or opposing arguments?	*H4a: Partisan students will exhibit a significantly higher argument repertoire score than non-partisan students prior to discussion.* *H4b:* Partisan students will be significantly less likely to incorporate new information into their understanding of the issue following deliberation than non-partisan students. *H4c:* Partisan students will be less likely to recall information that supports an opposing side of the issue at the end of the term.	*H4a*: Argument repertoire (pre-deliberation); partisan and ideological self-placement. *H4b*: Argument repertoire (post-deliberation); partisan and ideological self-placement. *H4c*: Argument repertoire (end of term); partisan and ideological self-placement.

Research Question 4

This question can be answered by correlating students' argument repertoire scores with their partisanship, as well as through examination of student interviews. Argument repertoire scores reflect the difference in the number of arguments supporting and opposing a student's position. These scores reflect biased assimilation of information both from research and deliberation.

H4a tests students' balance of information regarding the issue prior to deliberation. Linear regressions examined the relationship between partisanship and the argument repertoire score while controlling for demographic, educational, and other factors. Positive correlations between partisan strength and argument repertoire would indicate support for the hypothesis.

Tests for H4b are similar to those for H4a. The difference in each student's argument repertoire scores can be calculated to indicate the degree of biased assimilation that occurred during the deliberation. Students who have incorporated more opposing information into their understanding of the issue should see a reduction in repertoire scores, making the difference between the second and first score negative. Those who reinforced their own arguments during the deliberation should see an increase in repertoire score, making the difference between pre- and post-deliberation scores positive. There is expected to be a correlation between strength of partisanship and change in argument repertoire score. A positive regression coefficient for partisan social identity in the regression models would indicate support for H4b.

Again using argument repertoire as a measure at the end of the semester, I tested H4c to examine whether the impacts of deliberation endure two weeks following the exercise. Given the three time points involved, it may be appropriate to examine a within-subjects, longitudinal model to capture changes over time. Each student would serve as the 2nd level of the model and each reassessment of argument repertoire would serve as the level 1 outcome. A fully unconditional model was constructed to assess the amount of variance at the student level to determine if such a model is appropriate. Again degrees of freedom are a concern, meaning that multi-level models may be too complex for analysis of this particular data set.

Potential Issues or Limitations

As with any study, there are potential issues to anticipate that may impact the results and conclusions drawn. These include a narrow demographic and geographic

scope, a heightened political atmosphere, limitations of the survey, and the chosen environment for deliberation.

The participating schools in this study provide a substantial amount of political diversity. Yet, they do not have high levels of racial/ethnic diversity or socioeconomic diversity. There is the potential that drawing on rural communities from within a single state may impact the results. For example, participation in discussions about politics may be governed by different norms in different groups or different regions. Rural regions in particular, may be impacted by what Cramer (2016) refers to as "rural consciousness," or a place-based interpretation of current events that involves a general perception of urban areas and public employees siphoning resources away from rural communities. Replications of this study should seek a larger, more diverse sample so as to correct both issues of statistical power and generalizability.

It is likely that a study of partisanship in young people will be impacted by the active political climate surrounding the 2016 national elections. Being a presidential election year, it is typical to see increased media coverage of partisan differences and higher engagement in politics. These considerations might make students more aware of both their own and others' political feelings. Heightened political awareness and partisan tensions during the election may inflate the number of students identifying with a political party, alter the tone of student deliberations, and increase student perceptions of differences between the two major political parties. In other words, differences in student behavior and outcomes detected by the study may be artifacts of the election context of the study and not evidence of true differences between partisan and non-partisans

students. While the salience of political issues in an election year must certainly be acknowledged, I do not feel this represents a weakness in the design. Discussion-based pedagogies are at their best when the issues under discussion are timely and relevant. Given the current state of political discourse in the country, there are likely issues that activate partisan identities regardless of whether there is an election or not. Further, it is hoped that the results of this study will shed light on the mechanics of discussion when students have meaningful social identities (partisan or otherwise) relevant to the discussion topic.

Student political identities are likely more diverse than the measures used in this study can capture. While most partisans can be classified within the two-party system, I acknowledge that such a classification leaves out students who might identify with the Libertarian, Green, or other parties. Further, such students may find it difficult to place themselves on the ideological spectrum. For example, Libertarians, because they wish to minimalize government influence in all areas, tend to be conservative in economic matters but liberal in most social matters. Including a more diverse understanding of political identity is important for future research, though practical limitations prevent its inclusion on the surveys at this time. There are not sufficient numbers of these less-common political identifications in the sample to conduct meaningful statistical analysis. If such students are present in the sample, student discussion posts and interviews may provide data on how these students perceive discussions of political issues.

While the present study utilizes a diverse array of measures and techniques, it is important to remember that such instruments have been subject to criticism. For example,

authors such as Lupia (2016) have critiqued the civic knowledge scale used in this study as both a control and predictor variable. Though the scale tends to perform well on measures of validity, there are questions as to what inferences can be made from the questions included. Lupia argues that items about the basic structure of government do not adequately justify conclusions about an individual's knowledge of civics or politics. The scale, though correlated with many political behaviors, may not be a truly random sample of all possible political knowledge and may privilege a particular set of values over others. When using such measures, they must be interpreted within the proper context with knowledge of their limitations.

Lastly, the online deliberation used in the study may differ from face-to-face political contexts enough to limit the interpretation of the results. Online deliberation lacks many of the social cues found in face-to-face interactions. Not having some of these cues, which can serve to reinforce social status or silence other participants, tends to broaden participation in online deliberations (Ho & Mcleod, 2008). It should be noted, however, that these social cues may cause students to behave differently and produce different outcomes than the online deliberation proposed for this study.

Conclusion

In order to better understand the interaction between students' partisanship and the complex environment of the classroom, a wealth of data is required. The present design utilizes multiple avenues, both quantitative and qualitative, to approach the issue of student partisanship. By investigating whether partisan students differ from their non-partisan peers in terms of knowledge and self-efficacy, behavior during deliberation,

response to deliberation, and perceptions of the class as a whole, I hope to provide insight into how to best support and challenge student partisans in the classroom.

CHAPTER 4

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARTISAN AND NON-PARTISAN STUDENTS

Chapter 3 described a study of how student partisanship impacts social studies education, focusing on an online discussion of a controversial political issue. Two rural, Midwestern schools, Loomis High School and Nichols High School, participated in the study. In addition to participating in the online discussion, all students completed three questionnaires about their experiences with politics, the discussion, and a number of other variables of interest. Further, 10 students participated in additional interviews. The results of that study, presented and discussed in the next two chapters, broadly support the argument that partisanship is influential in student behavior and also provide some indication that school experiences can alter the effects of partisanship on some student outcomes. This chapter will review data from the surveys and interviews to explore baseline differences in knowledge, dispositions and perceptions of the classroom between partisan and non-partisan students.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 (R1) seeks to establish whether partisan students are different from their non-partisan peers prior to beginning the deliberation exercise. In particular, I examine commonly-used measures in civic education, such as civic knowledge, political efficacy, and open classroom climate. Further, I extend the analysis to explore whether students' perceptions of partisanship in the classroom impact their evaluations of the course or the teacher. The question and its associated hypotheses are summarized below:

R1: Are partisan students different from their non-partisan peers in terms of political and civic knowledge, sense of political efficacy, and perceptions of the classroom environment (e.g., climate for discussion, perceptions of classmate and teacher opinion)?

H1a: Students with partisan identities will have significantly higher political and civic knowledge than their non-partisan peers.

H1b: Students with partisan identities will have significantly higher levels of political efficacy than their non-partisan peers.

H1c: There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/classmate partisan distance and perception of open classroom climate.

H1d: There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/teacher partisan distance and perception of open classroom climate.

H1e: There will be a significant, inverse relationship between student/teacher partisan distance and positive course evaluations.

Baseline Differences Between Partisans and Non-Partisans

H1a and H1b were tested using a multivariate regression analysis, controlling for demographic variables, reported classroom experiences (previous social studies pedagogy exposure, recalled classroom climate, school democratic climate), and levels of school and community involvement. The outcome variable for H1a is the number of civic/political knowledge questions answered correctly. For H2b, political efficacy was

split into internal and external political efficacy and each was analyzed separately. The key predictor in both analyses is a measure of partisan social identity. The results of both analyses are summarized in Table 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1

Regression Predicting the Relationship between Partisanship and Civic Knowledge

	Model 4.1.A (Partisan Social Identity)	**Model 4.1.B (Strong Partisanship)**
	β (SE)	β (SE)
Partisan Social Identity	0.04 (.03)	
Strong Partisan		0.71 (.33) *
Social Studies Pedagogy	0.06 (.04)	0.04 (.04)
Open Classroom Climate	0.00 (.04)	0.00 (.04)
School Democratic Climate	0.04 (.05)	0.04 (.05)
School Involvement	0.03 (.07)	0.05 (.07)
Community Involvement	0.03 (.07)	0.03 (.07)
Female	-0.72 (.34) *	-0.71 (.32) *
White	-0.23 (.55)	-0.08 (.55)
SES	0.25 (.21)	0.26 (.21)
Constant	-0.47 (1.34)	-0.16 (1.25)
Adjusted R^2	.06	.08

Note. * $p < .05$

Contrary to studies with adults, there was no significant relationship between students' strength of partisan identity and the number of correct answers on a scale of basic civic/political knowledge (β = .32, p = .11). A visual inspection of the partisan identity strength variable suggested that there might only be differences in civic knowledge among individuals at the high end of the partisan social identity scale. The model was rerun substituting the partisan social identity predictor with a binary "strong partisanship" variable created by assigning individuals who marked 1 or 7 on the 7-point partisan identity scale a 1 and all other respondents a 0. Using this new predictor, the

model shows significant differences between strong partisans (β = .71, $p < .05$) and other students in terms of civic knowledge, with the strong partisans tending to have higher scores. Despite this result being more in line with studies of adults, it should be noted that neither model is statistically significant as a whole. Thus, these analyses provide only weak support for H1a.

Table 4.2

Regression Predicting the Relationship between Political Efficacy

	Model 4.2.A (Internal)	**Model 4.2.B (External)**
	β (SE)	β (SE)
Partisan Social Identity	0.46 (.11) ***	0.27 (.08) **
Social Studies Pedagogy	0.10 (.14)	0.08 (.11)
Open Classroom Climate	0.12 (.13)	0.01 (.10)
School Democratic Climate	0.34 (.17) *	0.09 (.13)
School Involvement	0.21 (.22)	0.18 (.16)
Community Involvement	0.05 (.23)	-0.02 (.16)
Female	-2.61 (1.06) *	-0.55 (.78)
White	0.45 (1.73)	0.85 (1.32)
SES	0.82(.66)	0.51 (.48)
Constant	-0.86 (4.21)	1.78 (3.06)
Adjusted R^2	.28***	.13*

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Regarding H1b, the results indicate a correlation between partisan social identification and both internal and external political efficacy. The relationship between partisan social identity and internal political efficacy (β = 0.46, $p < .001$) is positive when controlling for demographics, school experiences, and involvement. Partisan social identity also exhibited a positive relationship with external political efficacy (β = 0.27, $p < .01$). It should also be noted, although not the focus of the present analysis, that there are several interesting relationships between the control variables and both political

efficacy outcomes. Identifying as female was correlated with a substantial decrease in internal political efficacy ($\beta = -2.61$, $p < .05$). Increases in school democratic climate, on the other hand, were correlated with increases in internal efficacy ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$).

Partisan Distance and Perceptions of the Classroom Climate

H1c and H1d were tested using a single multivariate regression model (see Table 4.3). In the model, students' perceptions of open classroom climate served as the outcome variable. The focal predictors in the analysis were two measures of partisan distance, which reflect each student's perceived difference between themselves and their classmates or teacher. The measures are created by subtracting the student's self-placement on a 7-point partisan scale from their perceived placement of their classmates or their teacher and taking the absolute value. Controls were added for demographics (gender, race, income) and student involvement in the school and community. In addition, as the use of good pedagogy is often tied to perceptions of classroom climate (Hahn, 1996), students' recollections of pedagogies used in their social studies classes were included as a control. Several iterations of the model were run, dropping non-significant predictors (gender, income, school involvement, and community involvement) to improve model fit.

Table 4.3

Regression Predicting Student Perceptions of Open Classroom Climate

	β	SE
Partisan Distance - Teacher	-0.77	0.25 **
Partisan Distance - Classmates	-0.09	0.27
Social Studies Pedagogy	0.50	0.09 ***
School Democratic Climate	0.19	0.12
White	1.37	1.23
Constant	9.73	2.33***
Adjusted R^2	.38	

Note. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The results of the analysis provide support for H1d but not H1c. Perceptions of classroom climate are inversely correlated with partisan distance from the teacher (β = -.77, $p > .01$) but not partisan distance from the rest of the class (β = -.09, $p = .73$). In other words, students in this sample who perceived a greater distance between themselves and their teacher in terms of partisanship also tended to perceive the classroom climate as less open. Student recollection of good pedagogical experiences was correlated with higher perceptions of classroom climate (β = .50, $p > .001$), indicating that the impacts of partisan distance on perceptions of classroom climate are counteracted by exposure to good social studies pedagogies.

Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2008) found that actual partisan distance between students and teachers was not as impactful as students perceived distance. I used the teachers' self-identifications of partisanship to calculate an actual partisan distance score using the same procedure described above. I then reran the model in Table 4.3 substituting actual partisan distance for perceived partisan distance. Consistent with

Kelly-Woessner and Woessner's results, actual partisan distance was not a significant predictor of perceptions of open classroom climate.

Student comments during the interviews also suggest that perception of teacher partisanship may be tied to elements of an open classroom climate. In particular, students seem to be inferring teacher partisanship from how differing perspectives are brought up in the classroom. For example, Hannah, a student at Loomis High School, and Naomi, a student at Nichols High School, both state the teachers' choices of topics or materials hint at their political leanings.

CC: And then, if you had to guess, would you say you'd be able to tell what the political beliefs of most of your teachers are?

Hannah: Probably not. Especially this [election] year, it's so chaotic. I feel like both of the candidates are just kind of crazy.

CC: Okay, yeah.

Hannah: Some of them…there's probably a good 10 or so that I could probably pick out what they are going to do, but the rest of them not as much. I don't think I could pinpoint anything.

CC: Okay, so let's take those 10 that you could pick out. Is Mrs. [Albertson] one of them?

Hannah: Well, she's been telling us a lot of stuff like she doesn't even know what she's going to do in the election, like when it comes time to vote, but I could probably like guess. I think.

CC: And so what are the kind of clues that you use to make that judgment or what would you base that guess on?

Hannah: Just when we go through articles or stuff like that. Just the opinions that she brings forth… seem to support one party more than the other, and then, I don't know. She always sticks to certain situations and always strongly supports certain people of history, and so looking back at the presidents that she enjoyed and that she always wants us to know information about. It just kind gets you an idea of it.

Hannah, who identified as ideological moderate and political Independent, claimed she was able to figure out Mrs. Albertson's political feelings because of a perceived imbalance of political perspectives. Her comments imply that she felt that there was a lack of voices from the "other side." On the other hand, Naomi, a liberal democrat, seems to infer the teacher's political beliefs by whether or not the teacher choose to address social issues at all.

CC: When you talk about politics in courses, you kind of mentioned that you could sort of, you know, figure out the teacher. Could you say a little more about that? Like how are you able to tell what the teacher thinks, because, you know, they don't officially say it, as you said…

Naomi: Yeah, but you can, how they talk about things. Like if they are very cool with a lot of the social issues, especially in classes that talk about the issues in our world, and if they're very…you can kind of tell they lean a little bit more liberal, to that side. And if they don't want to talk about it,

> or if you ask them about it, and they say nothing, you can kind of tell. Because a lot of people don't like to be Trump supporters. If you ask them, and they're embarrassed about it, they don't say anything.

To Naomi, bringing up social issues in class is an indication of liberal political leanings. In her judgment, teachers who are silent on these issues, perhaps due to embarrassment, are implicitly conservative. There is a clear partisan dimension to her comments, as she assumes that individuals who support Trump hold socially unacceptable positions on social issues.

Such comments suggest that student perception of partisan distance is, in part, established through perceptions of open classroom climate. While partisan distance is correlated with perceptions of open climate, the relationship may be reciprocal, with levels of classroom climate forming the basis for the judgment of partisan distance, which then impact judgments of classroom climate.

Partisan Distance and Teacher/Course Evaluations

H1e predicts that higher partisan distance between students and their teacher will result in lower evaluations of the teacher and the course. A course evaluation form was split into two measures, with one set of items evaluating the teacher's behaviors and the other set evaluating the course content. Each variable was used as the outcome of a regression analysis. Similar to previous analyses, demographic variables and school and community involvement were added as controls. In addition, two other scales (political efficacy and perceived polarization) were added to the model as controls for the purposes of ruling out alternative explanations. Students high in political efficacy, for example,

might not have felt they had much to learn from a government course, and therefore might be expected to give lower course ratings. Lastly, variables that would be expected to raise or lower course evaluations (open classroom climate, school democratic climate, and social studies pedagogy exposure) were added to the model as controls.

Contrary to Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2008), who found that partisan distance predicted lower teacher and course evaluations by college students, students in this sample did not show any significant differences in teacher evaluations or course evaluations based on partisan distance between the teacher and classmates. These results do not support H1e. However, in Kelly-Woessner and Woessner's study, it was also found that ideological perceptions of the teacher influenced student evaluations of the course. A revised model was constructed that included students' perceived ideological distance from their teacher and classmates (constructed using the same methods as partisan distance). In order to preserve degrees of freedom and improve model fit, controls that did not show a significant relationship to the outcome variables (school and community involvement, school democratic climate, and social studies pedagogy) were dropped from the model. Further, each of the revised models was rerun to include theoretically reasonable interaction terms between partisan distances and predictor variables. Through this process, it was found that an interaction between ideological distance and the open classroom climate scale substantially improved model fit. Given that previous research suggests open classroom climate is associated with improved civic knowledge and participation (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schultz, 2001), it is reasonable to explore open classroom climate as a moderator of the relationship between

partisan or ideological distance and teacher and course evaluations. The revised models are summarized in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

Table 4.4

Regression Predicting Teacher Evaluations

	Model 4.4.A (Basic Model) β (SD)	**Model 4.4.B (Interaction Model)** β (SD)
Partisan Distance - Teacher	0.33 (0.33)	0.33 (0.32)
Partisan Distance - Class	0.62 (0.32)	0.60 (0.31)
Ideological Distance - Teacher	-1.53 (0.40) ***	-4.31 (1.00) ***
Ideological Distance - Class	-0.07 (0.41)	-0.03 (0.39)
Open Classroom Climate	0.22 (0.10) *	0.00 (0.12)
Perceived Polarization	-0.50 (0.22)*	-0.46 (0.21) *
Political Efficacy - External	0.38 (0.12) **	0.30 (0.11) *
Political Efficacy - Internal	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.07)
Female	-0.72 (0.97)	-0.82 (0.92)
White	3.96 (1.42) **	3.44 (1.36) *
SES[1]	-0.19 (0.51)	0.00 (0.49)
Ideological Distance: OCC		0.15 (0.05) **
Intercept	26.85 (3.46) ***	31.83 (3.70) ***
Adjusted R^2	.40***	.45***

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

In the revised models for teacher evaluations, partisan distance with the teacher (β = .33, $p = .33$) is still not significantly correlated with teacher evaluations, though ideological distance with the teacher is (β = -1.53, $p < .001$). The negative regression coefficient indicates that ideological distance has the inverse effect originally hypothesized for partisan distance. Increasing the distance between the student's reported ideology and their perception of teacher's ideology is correlated with a decline in scores

on student evaluations of the teacher. In this model, the open classroom climate scale has a significant positive relationship with teacher evaluations ($\beta = .22$, $p < .05$), indicating that more open classroom climates are correlated with higher scores on the teacher evaluations. When an interaction term testing open classroom climate as a moderator of the relationship between ideological distance and teacher evaluations is included in the model, it provides evidence that the relationship between ideological distance and teacher evaluations is contingent on the classroom climate ($\beta = .15$, $p <. 01$). In particular, the effect of ideological distance on teacher evaluations is far less when the student perceives a very open classroom climate than when the classroom climate is perceived as closed (see Figure 4.1).

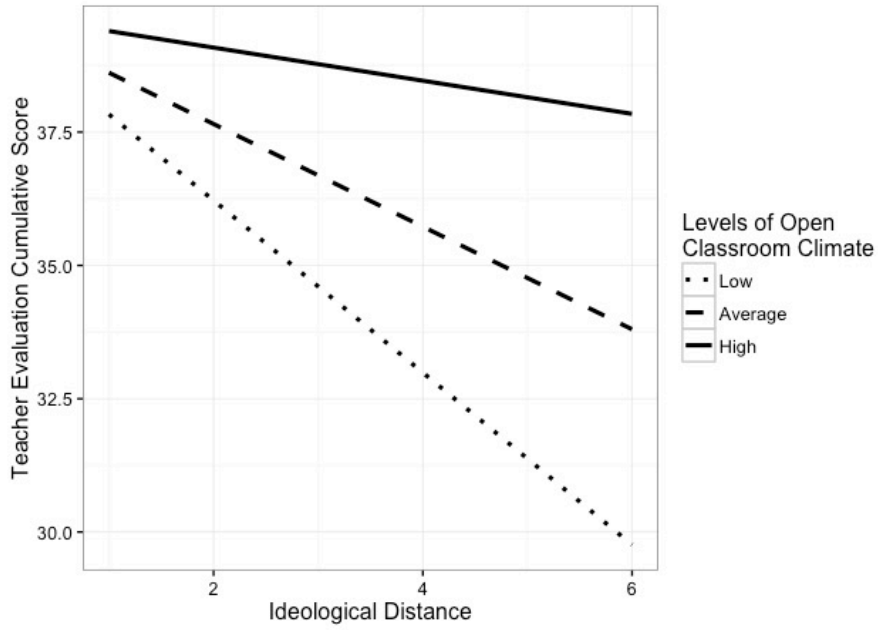

Figure 8.1. Relationship between ideological distance from the teacher and teacher evaluation score at differing levels of perceived open classroom climate.

Table 4.5

Regression Predicting Course Evaluations

	Model 4.5.A (Basic Model) β (SD)	**Model 4.5.B (Interaction Model)** β (SD)
Partisan Distance - Teacher	0.70 (0.24) **	0.71 (0.24) **
Partisan Distance - Class	0.27 (0.25)	0.25 (0.24)
Ideological Distance - Teacher	-0.75 (0.29) *	-2.44 (0.78) **
Ideological Distance - Class	-0.58 (0.31)	-0.56 (0.30)
Open Classroom Climate	0.31 (0.08) ***	0.18 (0.09)
Perceived Polarization	-0.06 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.16)
Political Efficacy - External	0.23 (0.09) *	0.19 (0.09) *
Political Efficacy - Internal	0.12 (0.06) *	0.12 (0.06) *
Female	0.15 (0.73)	0.08 (0.72)
White	3.74 (1.09) ***	3.44 (1.06) **
SES[1]	-0.07 (0.39)	0.03 (0.38)
Ideological Distance: OCC		0.09 (0.04) *
Intercept	3.79 (2.64)	6.83 (2.89) *
R^2	.42***	.45***

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

When predicting course evaluations using the revised model, the addition of ideological distance improves model fit. The model illustrates course evaluations are significantly correlated with both partisan distance from the teacher ($\beta = .70$, $p < .01$) and ideological distance from the teacher ($\beta = -.75$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, partisan distance has the opposite of the hypothesized effect, with increases in partisan distance between the teacher and a student being correlated with a higher course evaluation. Ideological distance, on the other hand, has the expected inverse correlation with course evaluations. Again, a more open classroom climate is associated with a significant increase in course

evaluations (β = .31, $p < .001$). Adding an interaction term between ideological distance and classroom climate to the course evaluation model suggests that open classroom climate serves as a moderator of ideological distance when predicting course evaluations (β = .09, $p < .05$). When the classroom climate is perceived as highly open, the impact of ideological distance on course evaluations is negated (see Figure 4.2). Although H1e was not initially supported, the revised models provide a clearer picture of the role of partisanship and ideology in how high school students view their teachers and courses.

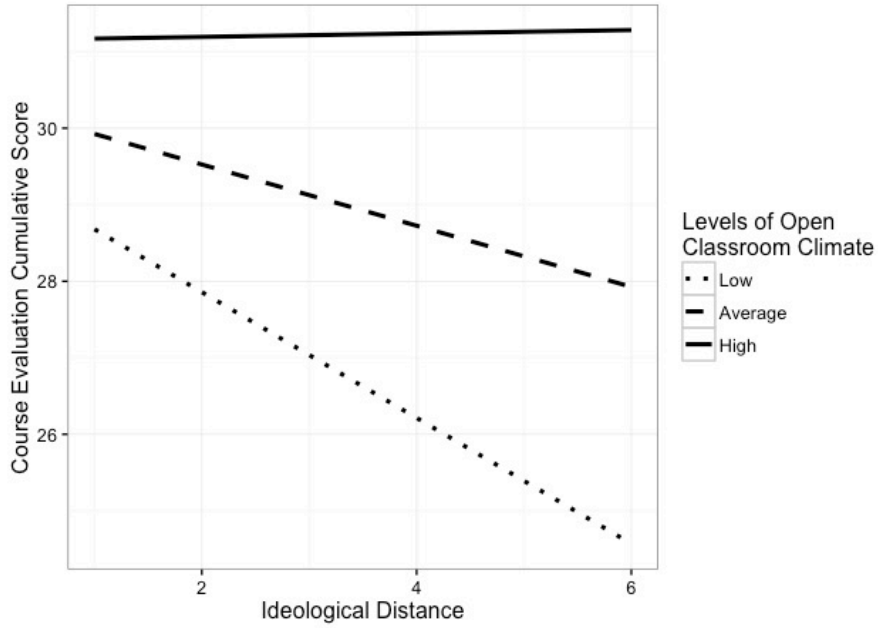

Figure 4.2. Relationship between ideological distance from the teacher and course evaluations at differing levels of perceived open classroom climate.

As with the models predicting perceptions of open classroom climate, the models in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 were recalculated using actual partisan and ideological distance in place of perceived partisan and ideological distance. In both cases, actual ideological distance from the teacher was a significant predictor, though both models explained

substantially less variance than the reported interaction models (R^2 = .32 for teacher evaluations, R^2 = .41 for course evaluations).

Summary of Results

R1 sought to establish baseline differences between partisan and non-partisan students. H1a, regarding civic knowledge, and H1b, regarding political efficacy, sought to replicate differences found between adult partisans and non-partisans (e.g. Levendusky, 2009). The results from this sample indicate that these differences exist in the high school students measured, though the relationship between partisanship and political knowledge is only visible between those who identify as strong partisans and those who do not. Partisans also tend to score higher on measures of internal and external political efficacy. In general, this sample of high school students supports the notion that younger partisans are similar to adult partisans in terms of their civic knowledge and political efficacy.

H1c-e tested whether students' perceptions of open classroom climate and ratings of the course and teacher are impacted by their perceptions of the partisanship of their fellow students and the teacher. Analyses found no support for H1c, that partisan distance between a student and his or her classmates impacted perceptions of open classroom climate. H1d, measuring the effects of partisan distance from the teacher, was supported. Partisan distance from the teacher significantly reduced perceptions of open classroom climate in this sample of high school students. While H1e, about the impacts of partisan distance on teacher and course evaluations was initially not supported, a more in-depth analysis revealed that perceived ideological distance between the student and teacher

were correlated with reductions in both teacher and course evaluations. Further, the revised models for H1e indicated that a highly open classroom climate moderates the negative relationship between ideological distance and these evaluations.

Overall, the investigation into R1 suggests that students' partisanship and ideology are the source of significant differences in the classroom. The implications of these differences will be discussed below.

Discussion of R1: Differences Between Partisan and Non-Partisan Students

The analysis of R1 established that there are differences between partisan and non-partisan students. Some of these differences, like civic knowledge and political efficacy, are correlated with students' partisan identification (or, in the case of civic knowledge, strong partisan identification). Other differences, such perception of open classroom climate or teacher/course evaluations, are more tied to students' partisan identity relative to their perception of the teacher's partisan identity (partisan distance). Greater differences in partisan identification predict lower perceptions of classroom climate and lower teacher/course evaluations. These differences are similar to those found in college students and adults (Kelly-Woessner & Woessner, 2008; Levendusky, 2009), though the present study represents one of the few efforts to measures these effects in high school students.

Civic Knowledge and Political Efficacy

Higher civic knowledge and political efficacy are both desirable outcomes. Yet, as the analyses of these students' responses are correlational, it would not be appropriate to conclude that students' partisanship is causing the increases in political efficacy or

knowledge. It is possible that students' partisan identities may motivate them to seek out information and engage in actions that support their chosen political group. It is also possible that students who have higher knowledge and a greater sense of efficacy have sufficient information to choose a political party they feel will best advance their stances on important issues. Although social identity theory (Iyengar et al., 2012; Tajfel, 1970) and research on how adult voters' opinions follow those of their political party (Lenz, 2012) suggest that students' partisan identities are more likely to drive behavior, the data from this study does not rule out the opposite interpretation.

Hess and McAvoy (2014) argued that, due to boons of civic knowledge, efficacy, and other outcomes associated with political partisanship, social studies educators should at least consider helping students develop partisan identities. To be clear, teachers would not point students towards a specific political party, but rather help them to see how their beliefs and values aligned with political parties. Such an approach, while not necessarily ruled out by this study, is likely a misinterpretation of the data on partisanship. The approach relies on the assumption that partisanship is a completely rational choice and ignores that many students may already have developed such identities prior to attending school (perhaps from the influence of family or community). The Hess and McAvoy proposal also takes a narrow view of the impacts of salient partisan identities in the classroom. As the results of this study reveal, partisanship is correlated with a number of student opinions and behaviors that need to be better understood before accepting such a recommendation.

The Impact of Partisan Distance

Partisan distance was inversely correlated with perceptions of open classroom climate. In other words, a student who perceives their teacher as belonging to the same political party as them will tend to rate the classroom climate as higher than a student who believes that the teacher belongs to the other major political party. In line with previous research (Hess, 2009; James, 2009; Journell, 2011) students in this sample inferred their teachers' partisanship through their choice of topics or the way they talked about those topics. No student interviewed for this study could recall either Ms. Albertson or Mr. Humphries directly mentioning their partisanship, though most had an impression of what their political beliefs were.

These results indicate an interesting dynamic in teacher political leanings. Regardless of whether teachers directly disclose their partisanship or, in the case of the teachers in this study, opt for neutral impartiality (Kelly, 1986), students will guess at their partisanship (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Subsequently, those teachers will be "punished" or "rewarded" based on the students' own partisan leanings when it comes to perceptions of open classroom climate. Such a dynamic is potentially consequential. Perception of open classroom climate is tied to student achievement in civics as well as other civic outcomes, such as intended voting (Campbell, 2008; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Quintellier & Hooghe, 2013; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Students who perceive themselves as politically different from their teachers may not receive the same quality civic education as those who perceive political similarities with the teacher.

The "punishments" or "rewards" based on perceived political differences with the teacher are also visible on teaching and course evaluations, though in this case they are

more responsive to perceived ideological distance than perceived partisan distance. Students perceiving greater ideological distances between themselves and the teacher tend to give lower evaluations to the teacher and the course. These results are similar to Kelly-Woessner and Woessner's (2008) study of partisan distance between college students and their professors. The current study goes beyond previous work in that it examines potential moderators of that relationship. In the two schools studied, evaluations of both the teacher and the course are moderated by perception of open classroom climate. Having a highly open classroom climate weakens the relationship between partisan distance and course evaluations. Perceiving the classroom climate as closed, however, tends to strengthen the negative relationship between the two. Because earlier results illustrated a correlation between partisan distance and perceptions of open classroom climate, it may be difficult for teachers to create the perception of openness among politically disagreeing students. If they are able to succeed, however, they are able to mitigate and, in the case of course evaluations, avoid the "penalties" of ideological distance on their evaluations.

Future research should investigate circumstances in which teachers can maintain perceptions of an open classroom climate regardless of ideological differences with their students. In the present study, both teachers adopted a stance of neutral impartiality (Kelly, 1986). Scholars such as Hess (2009), James (2010), and Journell (2011), however, recommend a stance of committed impartiality (Kelley, 1986) where teachers disclose their views along with holding a public commitment to making all viewpoints welcome in the classroom. Future research should investigate whether such a stance would be

better suited to fostering perceptions of open classroom climate, thereby countering the relationship between political difference and student evaluations.

While it is common advice that teachers should get to know their students, such advice has usually not been extended to politics. Many teachers will incidentally learn things about student political opinions through the normal course of teaching, but it is unlikely that partisanship is treated as a meaningful social identity in most classrooms. The results of R1, however, make the case that partisanship is not just meaningful to the individual student, but that it is connected to significant differences in knowledge and efficacy. Further, it substantially impacts the ways in which students perceive the classroom, with potential consequences for student learning and teachers' evaluations. Future investigations should examine the ways teachers foster open classroom climates with the goal of making all students feel welcome in the class regardless of political differences.

This chapter has summarized and discussed the results of investigations in the R1, whether there are differences between partisan and non-partisan students prior to discussion. The next chapter will explore differences between partisan and non-partisan students during and after an online discussion of a controversial issue.

CHAPTER 5

THE IMPACTS OF PARTISANSHIP DURING AND AFTER AN ONLINE DISCUSSION

The previous chapter described differences between partisan and non-partisan students prior to discussing a controversial issue online (R1). This chapter reviews and discusses R2-R4. Using data collected from the study conducted in two rural, Midwestern high schools, Loomis and Nichols, I will explore partisan differences in student participation in the online discussion, changes following that discussion, and ability to recall points for and against a given position.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 (R2) explores differences in the behaviors of partisans in the context of an online discussion of a controversial issue. The question and associated hypotheses are listed below:

R2: Do partisan students behave differently than their non-partisan peers in the context of small group deliberations? Does the composition of deliberative groups (uniformly partisan or mixed) moderate these behaviors?

H2: There will be an interaction between students' strength of partisanship and their group condition (uniform or mixed) when predicting discussion behaviors.

Recall that students were divided into groups of three or four, depending on class size and number of students who reported having a partisan identity. Each group's discussion was broken down into statements and each statement was coded using the

scheme established by Stromer-Galley (2007). First, statements were sorted into four broad categories: problem talk (discussion of issue), meta-talk (summary of the discussion), process talk (discussing the assignment or the forum), or social talk (non-problem talk directed at group members). Each statement was then broken down into subparts depending on its specific features. Depending on the complexity of the statement, each statement could have multiple subparts. The subparts were then grouped into clusters of behaviors for statistical analysis. For example, problem talk (by far the most frequently occurring type of statement) was broken down into five subtypes: Opinions, supporting facts, argumentation, agreements/disagreements, and questions. Opinions included any statements where a student expressed a position on the subject of the discussion. All statements that referenced specific statistics or sources were coded as supporting facts. Argumentation included all statements that were used to further a position but were not specifically connected to a fact (such as hypothetical examples or unsupported statements not classifiable as opinions). Agreements or disagreements were coded when students directly stated their position on a statement made by another discussion participant. All inquiries directed to the group or individual participants (excepting ones that were clearly rhetorical) were coded as questions. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 provide summaries of the classification and sub-classification of the statements, respectively.

Table 5.1

Tally of Discussion Behavior Categories

Problem Talk	**Meta-Talk**	**Process Talk**	**Social Talk**
740	2	4	39

As Table 5.1 illustrates, problem talk dominated the discussions. Among the various types of problem talk (Table 5.2), opinions and argumentation were the most frequent type. Interestingly, students justified their positions more with argumentation than with factual support. During the interviews, two students commented on the lack of specific factual support included in the discussions. For example, Naomi suspected that members of her group had not done the preparatory work prior to the discussion.

CC: How much do you think the opinions other people expressed were backed up by information or evidence?

Naomi: I know some people just said what they knew would pass as an answer [laughs]….Probably about half the students actually researched, I would say.

Similarly, Emma, a student at Loomis, expressed frustration at a relative lack of evidence from her discussion group.

CC: So during this discussion, you mentioned that they seemed to be trying to convince you. How did your opinion change, if at all, as a result of the discussion?

Emma: I don't think it really did change so much, because – I don't know – I like evidence to support claims and they didn't really have substantial evidence to say why they believe their things, but I supported mine like with a bunch of evidence.

CC: Okay, and so you felt that their points – they didn't provide a lot of specific evidence. Was it mostly – What did they provide?

Emma: They just said [stop and frisk] decreased the crime rate and I wanted to know how much did it decrease by, if it did? All the evidence that I had found said that it didn't decrease crime rate. It just stayed about the same.

Table 5.2

Tally of Discussion Behavior Sub-types

Problem Talk	
Opinions	348
Argumentation	337
Facts	81
Agreements/Disagreements	116
Questions	33
Meta-Talk	
Summary	2
Process Talk	
Mistaken Post	1
Technical Issue	2
Discussion procedure	1
Social Talk	
Praise	24
Gratitude	6
Reminder	1
Empathy/Encouragement	3
Greetings	3
Apology	3

Note. As a single discussion behavior can contain multiple sub-behaviors, the totals from this table will not necessarily match those in Table 5.1.

Other interview participants felt as though they lacked information about the discussion topic. Samantha, a student a Nichols High, discussed how she felt the lack of information shaped her discussion.

CC: Tell me how you felt discussing in the online environment when you were discussing taxes.

Samantha: I kind of liked it, enjoyed it because of my partner, the person I was arguing with in my group was opposed to [my position], so we had a good argument. I felt like arguing about the [tax] debate.

CC: Okay, so tell me a little bit about that debate. Do you feel like you learned a lot from that person, or do you feel like they were all arguments you'd heard before? Tell me a little bit more about that.

Samantha: They were arguments that I've heard before. Maybe – I don't know if she really understood what was going on. I didn't understand what was going on, so I feel like we were pretty even there.

CC: Okay. When you say, "understand what was going on," do you mean about taxes or what do you mean?

Samantha: Sorry, I mean about taxes. We didn't know any details or facts. We just knew the basics of what we learned in government [class].

Samantha felt as though her knowledge about the issue was confined to what she had studied in government class. Because she and her partner lacked any knowledge outside of the course summaries, the discussion, while an enjoyable argument, lacked depth.

While there were not enough meta-, process, or social talk behaviors to conduct statistical analyses, it is possible to analyze the impacts of student partisanship on the frequency of problem talk, both in the aggregate and for each statement sub-type. Multivariate regression models were used to predict the number of problem talk behaviors based on the strength of student partisan identity. Controls were added to each model for demographics, group condition, political efficacy, perceived polarization, civic

knowledge, high quality social studies pedagogy exposure, and perception of open classroom climate. Because students are nested in groups, a multi-level model was considered to better account for variance between the groups. While an interclass correlation coefficient indicated that approximately 31% of the variance was between groups, there were not enough cases at the individual level to satisfactorily draw conclusions from the multi-level model results. In order to better reflect between-group differences, an additional control variable was added to each model containing the total number of each measured behavior in each group. Lastly, as H2 predicts that group condition (uniform or mixed) will impact the behavior of partisans during a discussion, all models were rerun with an interaction term between group condition and partisan identity strength.

The results of the analyses (see Table 5.3), while indicating that partisanship impacts student behaviors during a discussion, do not support H2. In all the analyses, the interaction term between partisan identity strength and group condition was non-significant and was dropped from the model. Partisan identity strength was positively correlated with the total number of process talk statements ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$), as well as the amount of argumentation contained in the process talk statements ($\beta = .11$, $p < .01$). Partisan social identity was not significantly correlated with expressing opinions, using supporting facts, expressing agreement/disagreement, or asking questions in this sample.

Table 5.3

Regressions Predicting Problem Talk Behaviors During Student Online Discussions

	Problem Talk Total	**Opinions**	**Argument**	**Factual Support**	**Agree/ Disagree**	**Questions**
	β (SE)	β (SE)	β (SE)	β (SE)	β (SE)	β (SE)
Partisan Social ID	0.15 (.06)*	0.01 (.03)	0.11 (.04) **	0.02 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	0.03 (.01)
Mixed Group	-0.93 (.53)	-0.17 (.27)	-0.60 (.32)	-0.33 (.21)	-0.06 (.16)	-0.15 (.11)
Group Behavior Total	0.28 (.03)***	0.31 (.03) ***	0.32 (.03) ***	0.31 (.05) ***	0.28 (.05) ***	0.24 (.04) ***
Pol. Eff. External	0.03 (.07)	0.00 (.04)	-0.01 (.04)	0.01 (.03)	0.03 (.02)	0.02 (.02)
Pol. Eff Internal	-0.03 (.05)	0.00 (.03)	0.02 (.03)	-0.05 (.02)	-0.01 (.02)	-0.01 (.01)
Perceived Polarization	-0.27 (.12)*	0.00 (.07)	-0.07 (.07)	-0.11 (.05) *	-0.09 (.04) *	-0.03 (.03)
Civic Knowledge	0.26 (.17)	0.20 (.09) *	0.00 (.10)	0.15 (.07) *	-0.01 (.05)	-0.00 (.04)
SS Pedagogy	-0.14 (.07)	-0.10 (.04) *	-0.06 (.04)	0.00 (.03)	-0.01 (.02)	-0.01 (.02)
O.C. Climate	0.12 (.07)	0.07 (.03) *	0.04 (.04)	0.04 (.03)	-0.01 (.02)	0.01 (.01)
Sch. Dem. Climate	0.04 (.09)	-0.01 (.05)	-0.03 (.05)	0.06 (.04)	0.01 (.03)	0.03 (.02)
Female	1.19 (.55) *	0.88 (.29) **	0.64 (.33)	-0.16 (.23)	0.32 (.17)	0.08 (.13)
White	1.70 (.89)	0.37 (.47)	0.69 (.53)	0.06 (.38)	0.31 (.28)	0.21 (.20)
SES	0.20 (.32)	-0.03 (.17)	0.12 (.19)	0.02 (.13)	0.00 (.10)	0.02 (.07)
Constant	-3.47 (2.08)	-0.76 (1.11)	-2.09 (1.24)	-0.92 (.86)	-0.04 (.67)	-0.90 (.46)
Adj. R^2	.54 ***	.54 ***	.57 ***	.38 ***	.29 ***	.24 ***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

R2 Results Summary

Overall, there is evidence that partisanship impacts the behavior of students during a discussion, though that impact seems to be confined to their tendency to use argumentation (as opposed to factual support) during a discussion. Further, there is no evidence in this sample to support the notion that group condition moderated discussion behavior.

Discussion of R2: Student Behavior During an Online Discussion

Of the four main types of behavior coded during the online discussion, students in the sample engaged in far more "problem talk," or discussion of the specific discussion prompt, than any other type of talk. This finding is probably in line with many teachers' goals and expectations for online discussion. A productive discussion should focus on addressing the problem at hand. Less encouraging is the relative imbalance of problem talk-subtypes. Students in the discussion were far more likely to state their opinions or offer generalized arguments than they were to support either with specific factual information. During the online discussion, the ratios of opinion to fact and argumentation to fact were both approximately three to one.

It is possible that the design of the online forum may have served to encourage problem talk over other types of contributions. For example, students in this exercise were not explicitly instructed to explore many possible solutions or attempt to reach a consensus. Both of these changes might have encouraged students to engage more in meta-talk, as it would likely require more summarizing and highlighting of disagreement to keep track of progress towards consensus. While the instructions (see Appendix B) require students to create at least one original post and respond to at least one of their

classmates' posts, there were no word limits or requirements for using factual information. Without explicit requirements, student may have defaulted to sharing their opinions and use of argumentation, both of which are likely less cognitively demanding than providing specific factual support. Future studies should employ a variety of forum instructions to explore the impact of different requirements in deliberative environment.

In this sample, partisan social identity was positively correlated with the number of problem talk statements produced. In other words, the more a student identified with their chosen political party, the more problem talk statements they tended to produce. In particular, partisans seemed to favor argumentation statements (such as hypothetical examples or statements phrased as facts but not backed up with any citation). Because each individual statement could have multiple sub-statements, it may be that the significant effect for partisanship is not primarily driven by the difference in argumentation. It is likely, however, that argumentative statements contributed a substantial amount to that significant effect.

Given that partisans tend to have higher civic knowledge, one might expect that partisans would be able to provide more, albeit skewed, factual statements in their posts. Considering the discussions as a whole were low on factual information it may be that the students in general were unmotivated or unable to provide specific factual support for their arguments. Partisans may have simply had the advantage of having more arguments at their disposal, which they then used in place of facts. There are certainly many models of political discussions in the media that are mere exchanges of talking points. It is also possible that students, especially partisans, do not make a distinction between providing

factual support and arguing through talking points, although evidence from the interviews indicates that some students recognized that many arguments in their discussion were not accompanied by concrete information. There may also be an unwillingness to call out other students on unsupported statements, inapt metaphors, or other such statements. A norm of politeness may permeate the discussion, allowing argumentation to dominate the discussion even when participants notice that such statements are unsupported.

The results of this study once again illustrate the potential impact of partisanship in the high school classroom. Partisans tend to make more, though not necessarily better-informed, statements. While teachers should encourage students in general to substantiate their statements in a discussion forum, it may be wise to pay particular attention to partisan students.

Research Question 3

The third research questions seeks to better understand how partisan and non-partisan students are impacted by an online discussion exercise and whether these impacts are contingent on the discussion group context. The question and hypotheses are listed below:

> *R3:* Are partisan and non-partisan students impacted differently by deliberation? Specifically, are changes in sense of political efficacy, opinions about political groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), or issue opinions different between partisans and non-partisans? Does deliberative group composition moderate these changes?

H3a: Students' political efficacy should increase following the deliberative exercise, regardless of partisanship.

H3b: Partisan students will become more extreme in their opinions following deliberation, as compared to non-partisan students.

H3c: Partisan students will become more affectively polarized following deliberation, as compared to non-partisan students.

H3d: Deliberation condition (mixed vs. uniform) will moderate the changes described in H3b and H3c.

Impacts of Discussion on Students' Political Efficacy

Frequency of discussion is often associated with increases in political efficacy. H3a inquires as to whether these changes occur immediately following a deliberation and persist for at least two weeks. As with previous analyses, political efficacy is divided into internal and external efficacy. Paired t-tests were used to compare the measures of political efficacy prior to discussion with those after the discussion. A second t-test was used to compare the political efficacy levels after the discussion with those students reported approximately two weeks later. A final t-test compared overall change from Q1 to Q3. The results of the t-tests are summarized in Table 5.4.

Following the discussion students showed increases in both internal ($t = 10.44$, $p < .001$) and external ($t = 3.40$, $p < .001$) political efficacy. After the two weeks, however, internal efficacy returned to pre-discussion levels ($t = -10.95$, $p < .001$). External political efficacy, while showing a comparatively smaller effect, did not decrease two weeks following the discussion ($t = .25$, $p = .80$).

Table 5.4

Pairwise T-Tests of Changes in Political Efficacy at Q1, Q2, and Q3

	Q1/Q3 Mean Difference	**Q2/Q3 Mean Difference**	**Q1/Q3 Mean Difference[1]**
Internal Efficacy	4.28 ***	- 4.02 ***	0.15
External Efficacy	0.96 ***	0.08	0.94 ***

Note: *** $p < .0$

1. Due missing cases, differences from Q1/Q3 may not equal the differences in differences between Q1/Q2 and Q2/Q3

To delve more deeply into these associations, regression analyses were conducted to control for demographic factors, group condition, and partisanship. To control for differing quality of the discussions, further controls were added to the regression models to control for the amount of problem talk in each discussion, both at the individual and group level. None of the demographic factors, group condition (uniform or mixed), partisan social identity, or group behavior variables were significant predictors of changes external political efficacy either from Q1 to Q2 or Q2 to Q3. These results suggest that the change in external political efficacy was evenly spread across the students in the sample and provide partial support for H3a.

Changes in internal political efficacy from Q1 to Q2 (see Table 5.5) were positively correlated to both students' levels of partisan social identity and SES. Increases in partisan social identity were predictive of increases in internal political efficacy ($\beta = .23$, $p < .05$), as were increases in SES status ($\beta = 1.19$, $p < .05$). These same predictors were not predictive of the decreases in political efficacy from Q2 to Q3. Because the

changes were undone two weeks following the discussion, H3a is not supported regarding internal efficacy.

Table 5.5

Regression Predicting Changes in Internal Political Efficacy from Q1 to Q2

	β	SE
Partisan Social Identity	0.23	0.09 *
Mixed Group	-0.11	0.91
Process Talk: Individual	0.10	0.18
Process Talk: Group	-0.06	0.07
Female	-1.30	0.92
White	-2.85	1.51
SES	1.19	0.55 *
Constant	1.20	2.64
Adjusted R^2	.10	

Note. *p <.05

Impact of Discussion on Students' Issue Opinion

Following the discussion, I wanted to see if there was evidence of differing attitude changes between partisans and non-partisans. Literature on motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990; Lodge & Tabor, 2013) and opinion polarization (Sunstein, 2002) suggests discussing issues in like-minded groups tends to result in opinions being reinforced and becoming more extreme. Following the discussion, students indicated whether their opinion became weaker, remained the same, or stronger (Wojcieszak & Price, 2010). The measure uses a 1-9 scale, with lower values representing moving away from one's previous opinion and higher values indicating a strengthening of opinion. Marking a 5 indicates that a student's opinion did not change during the discussion. For the purposes of analysis, 5 was subtracted from every value to create a scale where positive values represented a strengthening of opinion, negative values represented weakening of opinion

and 0 represented no change. Most students in this sample either experienced no change in their opinion or a strengthening. The average score on the revised scale was .63.

Table 5.6

Regression Predicting Opinion Change

	Model 4.10.A	**Model 4.10.B**
	β (SE)	β (SE)
Partisan Social Identity	0.07 (.03) *	0.02 (.03)
Mixed Group	0.43 (.32)	0.36 (.29)
Amount of Disagreement	-0.05 (.05)	-0.08 (.05)
Female	-0.61 (.34)	-0.38 (.32)
White	0.35 (.56)	0.22 (.52)
SES	0.32 (.20)	0.26 (.19)
Political Efficacy - External		- 0.10 (.08)
Civic Knowledge		-0.65 (.28) *
Pol. Eff.: Civ. Knowledge		0.07 (.02) **
Constant	-1.39 (.95)	0.21 (1.17)
Adjusted R^2	.09 *	.27 ***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p <. 01$, *** $p < .001$

Regression analysis was used to predict perceived opinion change (Table 5.5) based on partisan social identity, demographic factors, group condition, and amount of disagreement in the discussion as predictor variables. Of these variables, only partisan social identity significantly predicted a perceived strengthening of opinion ($\beta = .07$, $p < .05$). A second model with an added interaction between group condition and partisan social identity did not explain any additional variance or improve model fit. A third iteration of the model (Table 5.6) added other reasonable predictors such as civic knowledge, internal and external political efficacy, perceived polarization, interest in diverse perspectives, and the amount of problem talk in the group as further predictors. Of these predictors, only civic knowledge and external political efficacy improved model

fit. Further, an interaction between civic knowledge and external efficacy was significant, suggesting that the impact of political efficacy on opinion change may be different depending on the student's sense of civic knowledge ($\beta = .07$, $p < .01$). In particular, the slope of the line predicting opinion change as a function of political efficacy is far greater when the student has a high level of civic knowledge (see Figure 5.1). At low levels of civic knowledge, the slope of the same line is flat. The addition of these terms made partisan social identity a non-significant predictor. These results suggest that strengthening of opinion in this sample is more a function of the civic knowledge and external political efficacy associated with partisanship rather than partisan identity itself. Thus, there is only limited quantitative support for H3b.

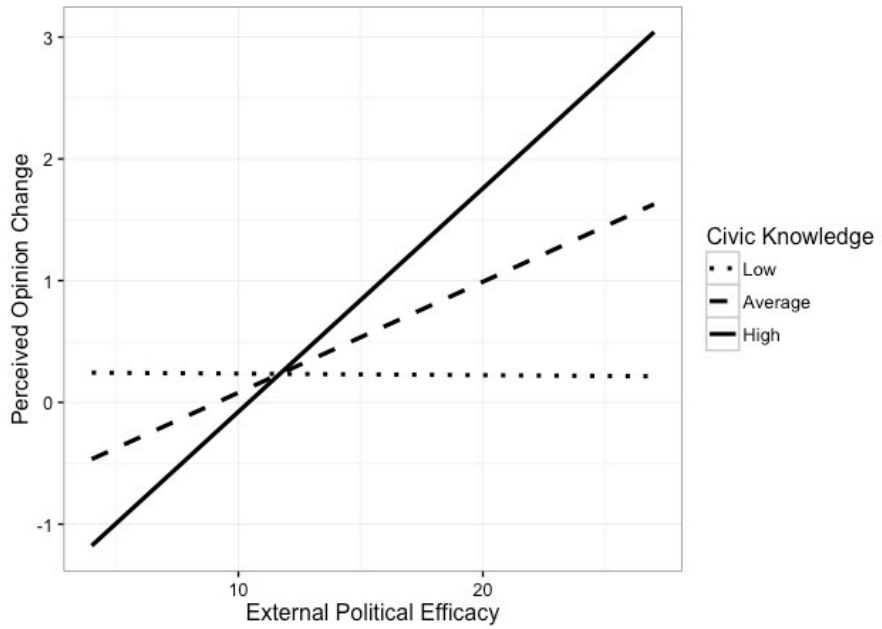

Figure 5.1. Interaction between external political efficacy and civic knowledge when predicting students' perceived opinion change.

Nine of the ten students interviewed discussed how their opinion was impacted by the discussion. Of these, there was also no consistent pattern of opinion change evident

across partisanship or group condition. Three students, Hannah (moderate Independent), Heather (conservative Republican), and Samantha (liberal Democrat) all claimed that the discussion moderated their opinion strength and exposed them to new ideas. Despite both Hannah and Samantha being in the uniform group condition, they reported that disagreements with their group members were an important factor causing them to partially change their opinion.

CC: You mentioned you'd come to consensus. Did your own opinion change at all on the issue?

Samantha: I think maybe I was a little radical in the beginning and then I sort of calmed down and think we both really compromised and then agreed with it.

CC: Let's say you were to go to the ballot box and vote and the issues of taxation were on there. Would you vote any differently than you would have at the beginning of the discussion? In other words, is your original opinion still what you would do in the real world?

Samantha: Yeah, it's different.

Another three students, Tim (conservative Republican), Theo (conservative Republican), Riley (liberal Democrat), and Peter (liberal Democrat) reported that their opinion stayed approximately the same throughout the discussion. Riley, who discussed in a uniform group, reported that her group members largely agreed from the start of the discussion and that there was not much new information in the discussion. Both Tim and Peter, who were in mixed groups, reported that their group members expressed differing

opinions, though both noted that there was not much engagement with that difference. Rather, as Peter puts it, "they just said their opinion and then that's pretty much it. They don't explain much more than that." Theo, also in a mixed group, perceived his group discussion as lively, though it ultimately did not cause him to change his opinion. Interestingly, he credited his contributions as causing a small opinion change from one of his group members.

CC: You mentioned that there was some disagreement between one other person and yourself. How did you handle that disagreement?

Theo: I think it was good. It gave me a chance to kind of try to persuade them as best as I could. It wasn't disrespectful or anything, but just to get them to see things from my point of view. And she also tried to get me to see things from her point of view, so it feels good that way.

CC: And would you say that that was successful? Were your opinions changed or do you feel their opinions changed?

Theo: I feel like hers was maybe softened a little bit. She didn't completely change sides with the argument, but I think both of us kind of got a chance to look at the other point of view, and I think hers was probably more softened than mine was.

Emma (moderate Independent) and Naomi (liberal Democrat) both said their opinions got stronger as a result of the discussion. Emma, who had earlier mentioned she felt the most prepared of her group, cited her perception that she had the better-supported arguments as the reason she strengthened her opinion:

CC: Do you believe your opinion just as strongly as you did before?

Emma: I would say it got stronger, because looking at my response compared to theirs. Like I said, I just had a bunch of evidence to support mine and none of them have evidence to support their claims, and it just kind of showed me that there wasn't anything counter to what I was trying to say.

Similarly, Naomi noted her opinion became stronger. In her interview, she also talked about the imbalance of information between her and her group mates and had expressed a disappointment that her group did not disagree with her more on the issue. Since everybody in her group agreed on the issue she felt her knowledge was strengthened:

CC: So, going back to the discussion you had on taxes, how would you characterize your before and after opinion?

Naomi: It think it became stronger, because of my group. Because we all agreed, there wasn't anyone fighting [my opinion]. And I got to see how other people view it, so it just added more of my opinion on it.

Emma and Naomi's comments support the identified quantitative relationship between civic knowledge and opinion change. Being both high in political efficacy and having a lot of information at their disposal, their opinion got stronger as predicted by Model 5.7.B.

Impact of Discussion on Students' Affective Polarization

Political scientists and psychologists often cite affective polarization, or the gap between feelings about one's own party and opposing parties, as an explanation for partisan rancor (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). H3c tests

the degree to which students' affective polarization changes in response to the online discussion.

Table 5.7

Regression Predicting Students' Affective Polarization Score

	Model 5.7.A (Basic Model) β (SD)	**Model 5.7.B (Interaction Model)** β (SD)
Partisan Social Identity	1.96 (.49) ***	3.19 (1.96)
Strength of Partisanship	10.08 (3.04) **	9.50 (2.98) **
Strength of Ideology	9.34 (2.32) ***	9.61 (2.30) ***
Social Studies Pedagogy	1.66 (.50) **	-1.61 (1.66)
Open Classroom Climate	-0.62 (.48)	3.34 (1.67) *
School Democratic Climate	-0.44 (.65)	-0.55 (0.63)
Peer Discussions of Politics	-2.94 (1.93)	-2.75 (1.88)
Parental Discussion of Politics	2.81 (1.80)	3.17 (1.80)
External Pol. Efficacy	-0.35 (.52)	-0.33 (0.52)
Internal Pol. Efficacy	-1.05 (0.38) **	-1.01 (.37) **
Civic Knowledge	2.79 (1.21) *	2.12 (1.21)
Classmate's Partisan Distance	3.67 (1.44) *	3.92 (1.40) **
Partisan Soc. ID:OCC		-0.25 (0.10) *
Partisan Soc. ID:SS Pedagogy		0.21 (0.10) *
Adjusted R^2	.72***	.74***

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Prior to testing the change in affective polarization, it was necessary to illustrate that high school partisanship was tied to levels of affective polarization in young people. Table 5.7 illustrates the results of two regression analyses predicting students' initial levels of polarization. Two items are of note: first, partisan social identity ($\beta = 1.96$, $p < .001$) and partisan identity strength ($\beta = 10.08$, $p < .01$) are both correlated with increases

in affective polarization and, second, there are two significant, opposing interaction terms in the model. The interactions between partisan social identity and both open classroom climate ($\beta = -.25$, $p < .05$) and social studies pedagogy exposure ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$) indicate that these two elements may have differing effects on partisan students' feelings toward others (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Namely, the relationship between partisan identity strength and affective polarization is much weaker in students who report a highly open classroom, but also much stronger in students who have historically been exposed to good social studies pedagogies. These results suggest that partisan affective polarization, though affected by the classroom environment and pedagogy, is present in the high school classrooms studied.

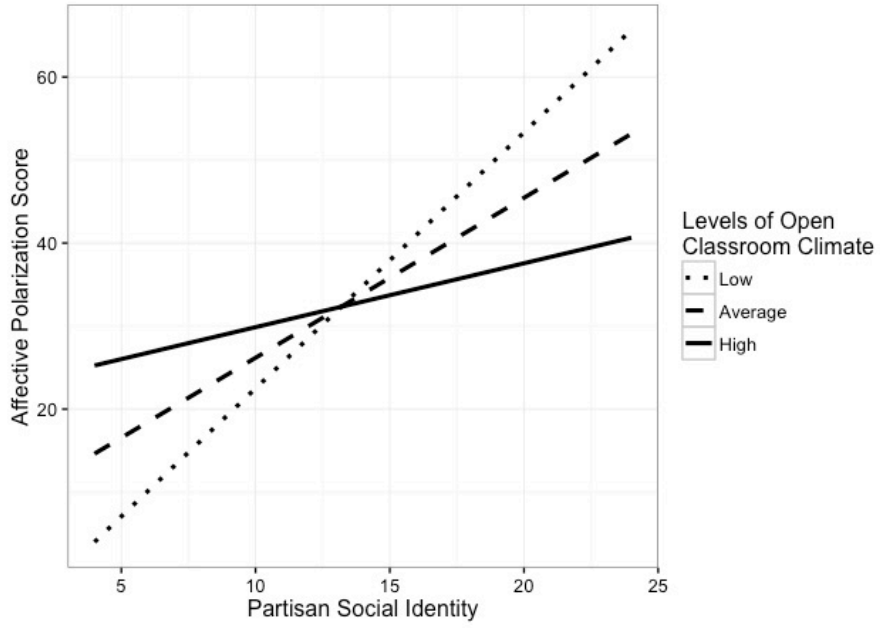

Figure 5.2. Relationship between partisan social identity and affective polarization at differing levels of open classroom climate.

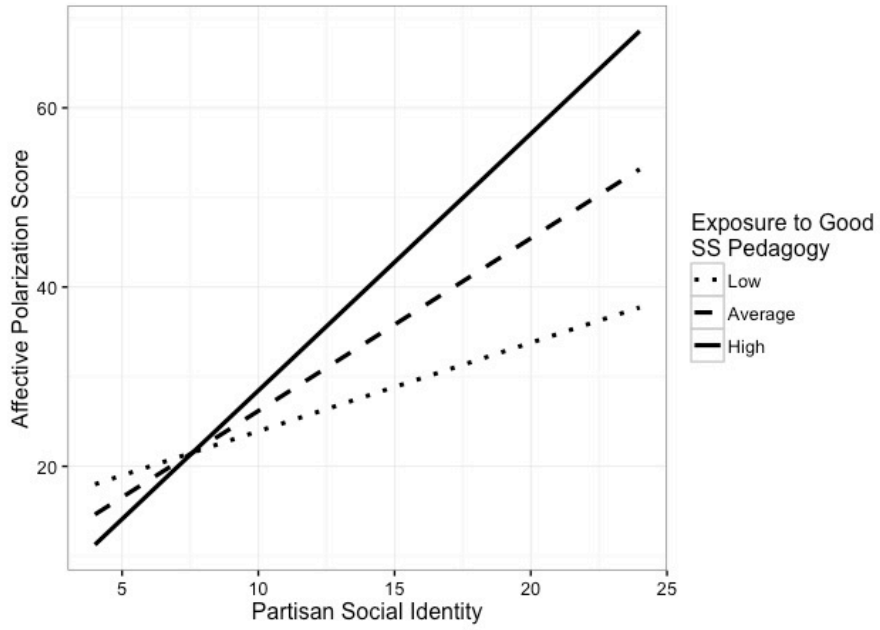

Figure 5.3. Relationship between partisan social identity and affective polarization at differing levels of exposure to good social studies pedagogy.

Following the discussion, students' affective polarization score from the pre-discussion questionnaire was subtracted from the post-discussion score to create a change in affective polarization score. The change in affective polarization was analyzed using regression. Using the models from Table 5.7 as a base, demographic factors as well as group conditions and discussion quality measures were added to the model. Several iterations of the model were run to improve model fit by removing non-significant predictors. In addition, several interaction terms from the previous model, plus an interaction between group condition and partisan identity were tested. The interactions between partisan social identity and both social studies pedagogy and group condition both improved model fit and were retained. The results are shown in Table 5.8.

While the results from the basic model do not provide support for H3c, those from the interaction model do. These results indicate that the relationship between partisan social identity and change in affective polarization is contingent on group condition ($\beta = 2.06$, $p < .01$). For students in mixed groups, the relationship between partisan social identity and change in affective polarization is as predicted in H3c, with stronger partisan identities being associated with increases in affective polarization and weaker partisan identities being associated with decreases. For students in uniform groups, this relationship is contrary to the prediction. Students with low partisan identity strength showed increases in affective polarization whereas those with high partisan identity strength tended to decrease their levels of affective polarization. Figure 5.4 illustrates the nature of this interaction.

Table 5.8

Regression Predicting Changes in Students' Affective Polarization Score from Pre- to Post-Discussion

	Model 5.8.A (Basic Model) β (SD)	**Model 5.8.B (Interaction Model)** β (SD)
Partisan Social Identity	-0.21 (.45)	-3.90 (1.68) *
Strength of Partisanship	4.65 (2.67)	2.63 (2.60)
Social Studies Pedagogy	-1.07 (.54)	-3.36 (1.32) *
Open Classroom Climate	0.80 (.47)	0.84 (.45)
External Pol. Efficacy	-0.02 (.51)	-0.29 (.49)
Civic Knowledge	-2.11 (1.23)	-0.96 (1.22)
Classmate's Partisan Distance	-2.35 (1.44)	-1.69 (1.38)
Group Condition - Mixed	-1.75 (3.81)	-34.27 (12.35) **
Group Problem Talk	0.46 (.22) *	0.51 (.21) *
Level of Disagreement	-0.43 (.71)	-0.72 (.67)
White	-13.17 (6.71)	-9.74 (6.48)
Partisan Soc. ID: Mixed		2.06 (.76) **
Partisan Soc. ID:SS Pedagogy		0.13 (.08)
Constant	14.61 (11.94)	78.07 (29.05) **
Adjusted R^2	.14 *	.23 **

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

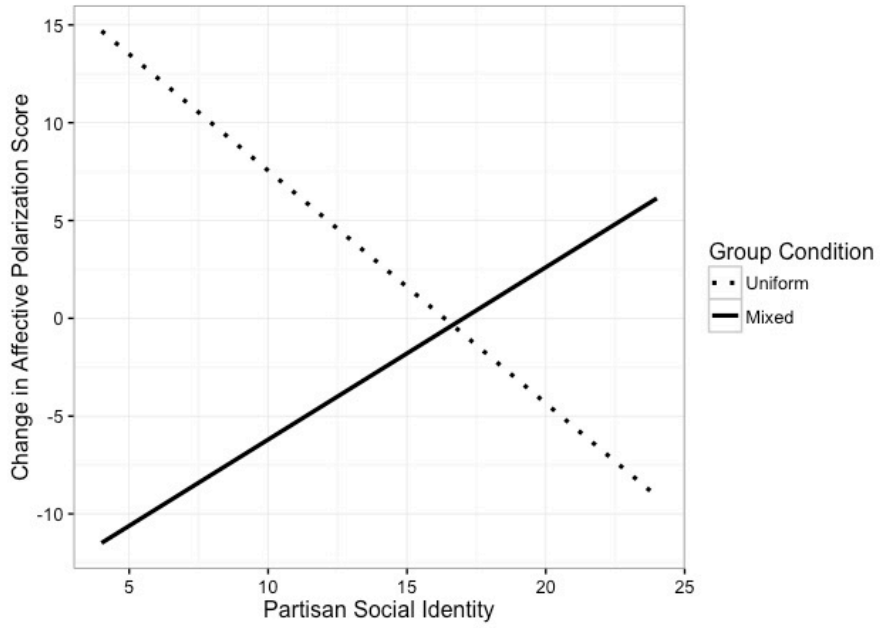

Figure 5.4. Relationship between partisan social identity and changes in affective polarization following an online discussion.

The Impact of Group Condition

The results of analyses for H3b and H3c provide mixed support for H3d. When predicting changes in opinion, group condition did not function as a moderator of partisan social identity. When predicting changes in affective polarization, however, group condition did act as moderator. The impact of the interaction, however, produces an effect for students in uniform groups in the opposite direction than what would be expected. I will consider possible explanations for this counterintuitive result below.

R3 Results Summary

The third research question focused on the impacts of the discussion exercise on partisan and non-partisan students. Following their online discussions, students generally showed an increase in external political efficacy, regardless of gender, race, family

income, or strength of partisanship. These increases were stable over the course of two weeks and did not significantly decrease between Q2 and Q3. Internal political efficacy showed a sharp increase from Q1 to Q2 and an equally sharp decrease from Q2 to Q3, with an overall non-significant difference from Q1 to Q3. These findings provide moderate support for H3a, as external political efficacy showed a stable increase following discussion, whereas changes in internal efficacy disappeared after two weeks.

H3b predicted that partisan students would be more likely to strengthen their opinion following a discussion than non-partisan students. There was only limited support for this hypothesis, as analysis did initially show a relationship between partisan identity strength and strengthening of student opinion Later analyses, however, indicted that external political efficacy was a far more significant predictor.

H3c was also moderately supported, though it was found that the effects of partisan identity strength were contingent on the group context of students' discussions. Students in mixed partisan groups showed the expected positive relationship between partisan strength and change in affective polarization. Uniform political groups, on the other hand, showed an inverse relationship between partisan identity strength and changes in affective polarization.

Discussion of R3: Partisan and Non-Partisan Students Following the Discussion

In addition to having different knowledge and efficacy prior to discussion and behaving differently during the discussion, partisans are impacted differently by online discussion. While all students seemed to benefit from the discussion in terms of their political efficacy, partisans show differing patterns of opinion change and changes in

feelings about political groups than non-partisans (though this latter change is contingent on group condition).

Changes in Political Efficacy

As expected, students in all groups showed a general trend of increasing external political efficacy that was still evident at the follow-up survey two weeks after the discussion. Internal efficacy showed an initial increase, though that increase did not persist through the follow-up survey two weeks later. Studies of classroom discussions generally note that students who discuss issues in school show increased political efficacy (Hess, 2009). Because participation in a discussion requires students to show their knowledge and advocate for an opinion on a political matter, a change in external efficacy would be expected. An increase in internal efficacy following discussion would also be expected, as students generally become more knowledgeable about issues and institutions over the course of a discussion, thereby increasing their sense of competence. Unfortunately, the boost to internal efficacy did not endure beyond the discussion exercise, possibly because the information learned from the discussion was no longer relevant to the content of the courses or students' concerns. Despite partisans tending to have higher political efficacy at the start of the discussion, there were no significant associations with partisan social identity strength and increases in external political efficacy. Partisan social identity predicted increases in internal political efficacy from Q1 to Q2, though as noted earlier, the changes were not stable. In addition, it seems that group condition did not affect changes in students' political efficacy.

These results add two points to the literature suggesting that discussions of controversial issues have a positive impact on students' political efficacy. First, it raises the question of what types of political efficacy were promoted by the online discussion. Both internal and external efficacy increased, though only external efficacy seemed to be stable over the course of two weeks. Second, it raises the question of what teachers can do to ensure that the internal, knowledge-based efficacy gained from the discussion does not disappear as soon as students move on to another topic.

Changes in Student Opinion

Following the discussion, students were asked whether they perceived that their opinion got stronger or weaker. This measure provides insight into student thinking that might not necessarily be captured on a scale of how much a student agrees or disagrees with a given proposition (Wojcieszak & Price, 2010). Namely, students' positions on a given issue may or may not change over the course of that discussion, but they may feel their opinion was confirmed or challenged during the discussion. The regression models for student changes in opinion initially indicated that partisan social identity was positively correlated with a strengthened opinion after the discussion. Further investigation, however, revealed that political knowledge and efficacy were much better predictors of opinion strengthening than partisan identity strength. Further, there was a significant interaction between external political efficacy and political knowledge, indicating that civic knowledge acts as a moderator of political efficacy's relationship to opinion change (or external political efficacy is acting as a moderator of civic knowledge's relationship to opinion change).

These results do not necessarily mean that changes in opinion are completely unrelated to partisanship, though they do suggest that partisans' tendency to strengthen their opinion after discussion may be more a function of increased knowledge and efficacy typically correlated with partisanship rather than the partisanship itself. While this means that partisans, because they typically have higher knowledge and political efficacy, are more likely to strengthen their opinions, non-partisan students with similar characteristics will also likely strengthen their opinions.

Looking closer at civic knowledge as a moderator of the relationship between external political efficacy and opinion change, it seems that knowledge is acting as an enabler of political efficacy. When individuals score low on the measure of civic knowledge, the relationship between opinion change and efficacy is practically flat. Individuals scoring high on measures of civic knowledge, however, show a positive relationship between efficacy and strengthening of opinions. In other words, students who have a basic knowledge of governmental functioning plus a belief that their actions can make a difference are also more likely to have their opinions confirmed by the discussion.

Students high in knowledge and efficacy are likely to be among the higher performing students in any given social studies class and thus may be overlooked by teachers who use discussion. Yet, these students are also more likely to reinforce their own beliefs during a discussion. Teachers may need to go out of their way to make sure these students challenge their existing positions in the course of an online discussion. It should be noted that strengthening one's opinion is not, in and of itself, normatively

negative. Rather, it is important for teachers to be sure that students whose opinions are likely to be strengthened by a discussion have considered alternative perspectives. While the format of the online discussion used in this study certainly exposed many of these students to differing opinions, some discussion formats may be better at generating perspective taking than others. Structured Academic Controversies (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013), for example, require all participants in the discussion to present arguments for both sides of the issue, something that was not a requirement for this study. Overall, these results suggest that teachers should be cognizant of the features of varying discussion formats and choose the one that will best encourage growth in the students in their classroom.

Student Feelings About Political Groups Before Discussion

Political polarization is often cited as one of the key challenges to democratic citizenship education (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge, 2013). Differences of political opinion, however, are not normatively problematic, regardless of how systemic they are. Disagreements are a part of democracy. The way those disagreements are handled, however, has the potential to be problematic. Affective polarization, or increasingly positive feelings about one's own political group and negative feelings toward opposing groups, is a more suitable measure of problematic political divisions.

As of this writing, there are no studies of affective polarization in high school students of which I am aware. As such, before measuring how affective polarization changes in response to a controversial issues discussion, I wanted to create a picture of

affective polarization in the high school classroom prior to the discussion. As would be expected from studies of adults, there is a positive relationship between students' partisan social identity and their level of affective polarization. A student with a strong partisan social identity is likely more affectively polarized than students with weak partisan social identities.

There is also evidence that what happens in the social studies classroom can have measurable impacts on students' levels of affective polarization. Both the open classroom climate measure and exposure to good social studies pedagogy (e.g., frequent discussions, attention to current events, community projects) significantly moderated the relationship between partisan social identity and the students' levels of affective polarization. Furthermore, the direction of these two moderators is oppositional. In other words, students who perceive highly open classroom climates tend to have a weaker, though still positive, relationship between partisan social identity and affective polarization. Students historically exposed to a high number of good social studies pedagogies, on the other hand, show a stronger relationship between partisan social identity and affective polarization.

From a political psychological perspective, these differing impacts of the two variables make sense. Social connections, such as those built in classrooms with open climates, have been suggested as a way to decrease partisan discord (Haidt, 2012). If partisan strife is built around competing social identities (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015), classes that form strong communities might provide an alternate identity that can counteract the effect of partisan social identity. Further, good social studies pedagogy is

designed to develop the very things that are also commonly associated with polarized partisan identities, such as civic knowledge and political engagement (Hess & McAvoy, 2014). The skills that students develop when exposed to good social studies pedagogy can also be used to justify and reinforce partisan identities.

In social studies research, pedagogy and classroom climate are often linked (Hahn, 1996). The success of many discussion exercises, for example, hinges on students feeling safe enough to express their views. The results from this study, however, highlight that pedagogy and climate are separate constructs that can have differing effects in a classroom. When studying complex political behaviors in the context of a social studies classroom, researchers should expect that disparate elements of the classroom could have opposing effects, and that promoting one outcome, such as civic knowledge or political engagement may have a tradeoff, such as higher affective polarization.

It is important to note that there is no evidence from the present study to indicate that good social studies pedagogy necessarily facilitates affective polarization. Rather, the evidence points towards the potential of good pedagogies to increase affective polarization. It is possible that variations in the way pedagogies are employed (e.g., there are vastly different interpretations among students and teachers of what constitutes a "discussion") and the content taught could produce different patterns than those found in these data.

These results also provide a new array of questions to investigate when studying discussions in the classroom. For example, researchers should study whether the impact of open classroom climates can be magnified to counteract the tendency of good

pedagogy to increase affective polarization. Careful attention to discussion climates or, as noted earlier, issues of teacher disclosure, may identify particular discussion strategies that create a larger sense of community and common identity in the classroom. Furthermore, future research should examine the long-term impacts of climate and pedagogy on affective polarization. It is currently unknown whether these effects on affective polarization persist into adulthood.

Changes in Feelings About Political Groups After Discussion

After establishing that there is a relationship between affective polarization and partisan social identity prior to discussion, I then analyzed how students' affective polarization changed after the discussion. I anticipated that partisan social identity would predict increases in affective polarization. It was also hoped that discussing in a mixed group would moderate those increases. In other words, the hypothesis predicted that the impact of partisan social identity on changes in affective polarization would be less in mixed-opinion groups than in uniform partisan groups.

The results were the opposite of the hypothesized interaction. Mixed groups showed the expected positive relationship between partisan social identity and changes in affective polarization. Individuals in mixed groups with stronger partisan social identities tended to be more affectively polarized after the discussion than before it. The uniform groups, however, defied expectations and had a negative relationship between partisan social identity and affective polarization. Students in uniform groups who had strong partisan social identities showed a decrease in affective polarization after the discussion.

There are several possible explanations for these counterintuitive results. To begin, it is fair to question whether the result is a quirk of the sample or the particular discussion context. Because of the relatively small sample size, unique circumstances, such as students doing a particularly diligent job research opposing viewpoints, would not be balanced out by more typical partisan biased information seeking. The results could also be a function of the particular measures used. As would be expected, the two uniform independent groups aside, groups composed of partisans were more affectively polarized at the beginning than the mixed groups, which contained more self-identified independents. On the whole, the uniform groups were still more affectively polarized after the discussion than the mixed groups. Because they were more polarized to begin with, it may be that strongly partisan individuals in uniform groups had nowhere to go on the scale if they became more affectively polarized. The members of uniform groups with strong partisan identities who became less affectively polarized may create the impression of a downward trend in the model. Factors not in the model could also have impacted the results. While there were no differences between uniform and mixed groups in terms of measured discussion behaviors, it is possible there were other differences among the groups not captured by the surveys.

There is a possibility that the result is not an artifact of the sample or measurement, but is reflective of a process among students with strong partisan social identities. Perhaps students with strong partisan identities who encountered little disagreement in their groups felt confident enough that they did not feel the need to reinforce their self-esteem through high ratings of their own party or low ratings of the

opposition. Ideally, students with strong identities are seeking out alternative perspectives in the course of their research and are more open to those perspectives in the absence of partisan threat in their uniform groups. Conversely, it is also possible that students with weaker partisan social identities had their beliefs or opinions reinforced by their conversations in uniform groups, accounting for their increase in polarization. More investigation and replication is needed in order to narrow the range of possibilities for this result.

It is also hoped that being in a mixed group might mitigate affective polarization. While this seems to be true for students who report low and mid-range partisan social identity, students reporting higher partisan social identity seem to become more affectively polarized, even in mixed groups. It may be that students in mixed partisan groups experience the opposite phenomenon as those in uniform groups. Partisan students with lower social identity scores may not feel as threatened by exposure to alternative viewpoints as those with higher partisan identities. As a result, they may not feel the need to reinforce their identity through low ratings of the opposite party or high ratings of their own party following the discussion.

Despite some lingering uncertainty regarding the findings for uniform groups and affective polarization, it is clear that what happens during an online discussion of a controversial issue matters for students. It is also clear that partisanship impacts how students respond to a controversial issue discussion, though in the case of opinion change it appears that these changes are more due to the correlates of partisanship than partisanship itself. Importantly, there is evidence that classroom experiences, particular

an open classroom climate, tend to reduce affective polarization in students. Such a finding is important in that it suggests that political socialization may play a role in the formation of partisan animosity beyond that of establishing identities through parents or community. Further investigations should extensively test how open classroom climate impacts students' levels of affective polarization in other conditions.

Research Question 4

Research question four inquired about the extent to which students learn opposing perspectives and arguments from the discussion. The question and its hypotheses are listed below:

R4: Does the strength of students' partisanship influence the degree to which they consider differing opinions or opposing arguments?

H4a: Partisan students will exhibit a significantly higher argument repertoire score than non-partisan students prior to discussion.

H4b: Partisan students will be significantly less likely to incorporate new information into their understanding of the issue following deliberation than non-partisan students.

H4c: Partisan students will be less likely to recall information that supports an opposing side of the issue at the end of the term.

If partisan students are more prone to motivated reasoning and biased information seeking, they should, in general, recall more reasons from their own side of the argument and less from the other. The key measure in this research question is argument repertoire

(Capella, Price, & Nir, 2002), or the difference between arguments a student produced for his or her own side of the discussion and ones generated for the opposing side.

Argument repertoire score was tallied by subtracting the number of opposing arguments listed from the number of supporting arguments. Table 5.9 lists the average argument repertoire score for each questionnaire, separated by uniform and mixed group conditions. Positive scores indicate a balance of information in favor of students' original opinion. Notably, both groups show a significant decline in the number of opposing arguments they are able to generate during the end of the study questionnaire ($t = -3.67$, $p < .001$).

Table 5.9

Argument Repertoire Scores by Group Condition

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Uniform			
Supporting	2.58	2.57	2.38
Opposing	2.13	2.30	1.77
Difference	0.44	0.27	0.61
Mixed			
Supporting	2.70	2.89	2.60
Opposing	2.00	2.15	1.72
Difference	0.70	0.74	0.88

Pre-Discussion Differences in Argument Repertoire

Both t-tests and regression models were used to analyze differences between partisans and non-partisans in terms of argument repertoire. Results of the t-tests indicate that there were no significant differences in argument repertoire score in the sample

between partisans and non-partisans during the pre-discussion survey. Regression models controlling for demographics and prior social studies experiences also showed no significant relationships between partisanship or partisan social identity and starting argument repertoire score. Thus, there is no support for H4a in the present sample.

Table 5.10

Regression Predicting Change in Argument Repertoire Scores from Q1 to Q2

	β	SE
Partisan Social Identity	0.09	0.04 *
Group Condition - Mixed	0.56	0.37
Level of Disagreement	-0.15	0.07 *
Group Problem Talk	-0.05	0.02 *
Social Studies Pedagogy	-0.10	0.05 *
Open Classroom Climate	0.09	0.05
School Democratic Climate	0.09	0.06
Civic Knowledge	0.18	0.12
Political Efficacy - Internal	-0.04	0.04
Political Efficacy - External	0.02	0.06
Constant	-0.82	1.28
Adjusted R^2	.13 *	

Note. * $p < .05$

Change in Argument Repertoire Following Discussion

Analysis of H4b used regression to model the change in argument repertoire from the pre- to post-discussion questionnaire. Key predictor variables were partisan social identity, group condition (uniform or mixed), and the amount of problem talk at both the group and individual level. Controls were added for demographics, school experiences, civic knowledge, and political efficacy. To improve model fit, several non-significant

predictors were dropped. Interactions between partisan social identity and group conditions were tested, though they did not substantially improve the model. Table 5.10 displays the results of the analysis.

The results of the regression analysis provide support for H4b. Partisan identity strength is correlated with a significant increase in the students' argument repertoire score ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$), indicating that the balance of arguments from the pre- to post-discussion questionnaires shifted in favor of students' existing opinion. Although group condition was not a significant predictor of change in argument repertoire score, the reported amount of disagreement between a student and their group predicts a decline in argument repertoire scores ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$). Additionally, the total amount of problem talk in each group was inversely correlated with argument repertoire scores ($\beta = -.05$, $p < .05$).

Table 5.11

Regression Predicting Change in Argument Repertoire Scores from Q2 to Q3

	β	SE
Partisan Social Identity	-0.13	0.04 **
Group Condition - Mixed	-2.29	0.95 *
Level of Disagreement	0.08	0.05
Social Studies Pedagogy	0.05	0.04
Open Classroom Climate	-0.06	0.04
Political Efficacy - External	-0.04	0.04
White	-1.05	0.52 *
SES	0.30	0.19
Partisan Soc. ID: Mixed	0.15	0.06 *
Constant	2.59	1.17 *
Adjusted R^2	.17 **	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Argument Repertoire at the End of the Study

Following the same procedure as H4b, analysis of H4c used regression models to predict changes in argument repertoire from the post-discussion to the follow-up questionnaire two weeks later. Table 5.11 displays the final model. In contrast to the model for H4b, this model shows a significant interaction between partisan social identity and group condition ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$). This interaction indicates that the impact of partisan social identity on change in argument repertoire in the weeks following the discussion is different depending on whether the student was in a uniform or mixed group. In mixed groups, there is a positive relationship between partisan social identity and change in argument repertoire at the end of the study. In uniform groups, the correlation is inverse, with high partisan identity students showing a reduction in their argument repertoire scores. Figure 5.5 illustrates this interaction. Thus, the analysis partially supports H4c, as partisans in mixed groups did tend to show increases in argument repertoire scores, though these results were not replicated in uniform groups.

R4 Results Summary

While partisanship did not predict differences in starting argument repertoire scores (H4a), partisan identity strength was predictive of changes in argument repertoire scores over the course of the study. H4b was supported by the data, with increases in argument repertoire scores correlated with increases in partisan social identity. Further, H4c was partially supported, with students in mixed groups showing a positive relationship between partisan identity strength and argument repertoire. The opposite relationship was observed in students who discussed in uniform groups.

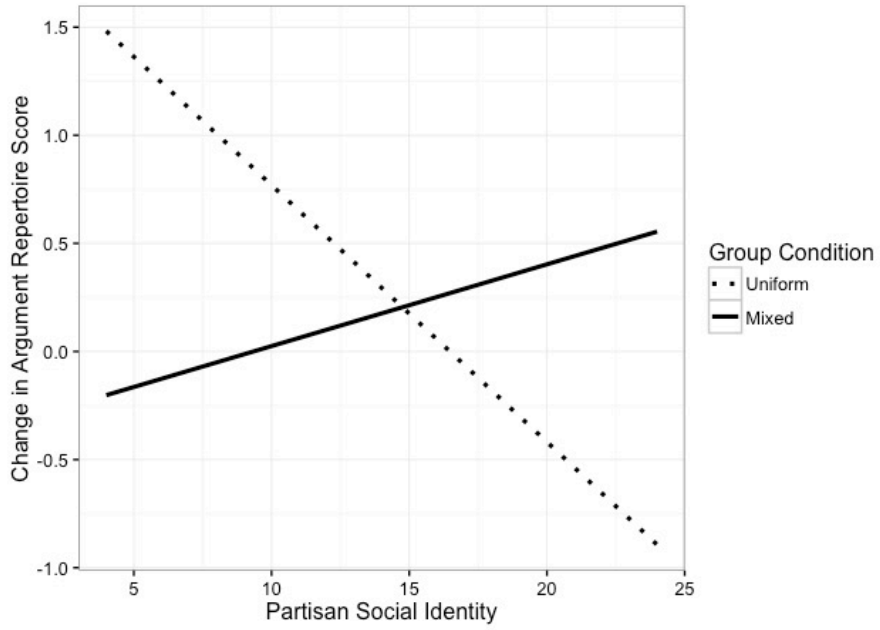

Figure 5.5. Relationship between partisan social identity and change in argument repertoire scores across group conditions.

Discussion of R4: Biased Assimilation of Political Information

Delving further into the impacts of discussions on students, I also examined the degree to which students were able to learn about their own position and positions disagreeing with theirs. In particular, I wanted to investigate whether students were exhibiting biased assimilation of information over the course of the discussion. Biased assimilation was tested through the use of an argument repertoire measure, which subtracts the number of arguments students can generate for somebody who would disagree with their position from the number that students can generate for their position. While it is expected that most students would be able to generate more arguments for positions they agree with at the start of the study, the changes from survey to survey were more of interest. These changes indicate whether or not students are becoming more balanced in their knowledge of arguments for or against a position (a decreasing

argument repertoire score) or whether they are exhibiting biased assimilation of positions that support their own (an increasing argument repertoire score).

Prior to looking at partisanship as an explanatory variable, I examined the general trends of argument repertoire scores across all students. Generally, mixed groups had higher argument repertoire scores throughout the study. The point that stands out is the rapid decline of arguments recalled by both groups at the follow-up survey two weeks after the discussion. The decline in information is such that students are generating fewer arguments both in support of and against their position than they were at the beginning of the study. It is likely that survey fatigue is to blame for some of the decline in arguments. The follow-up survey was the third time the students had been exposed to this particular set of questions in a relatively short time period. In addition, argument repertoire is one of the more cognitively demanding measures on the surveys. It may be that fatigue with the measures and taking surveys in general caused them to put less effort into these questions.

Even if survey fatigue is partially to blame for the general decline in raw numbers of arguments, it is interesting that argument repertoire scores actually rose in both types of group. This is driven mostly by declines in the amount of opposing information that both groups were able to recall. In other words, even if they were fatigued and willing to expend less effort overall, students were more willing to expend effort on information that agreed with their position than information that disagreed with it. These results are in line with literature stating that individuals are more apt to dismiss information that

disagrees with their pre-conceived notions (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015) or threatens their social identity (Dalton & Huang, 2014).

Partisans and Changes in Argument Repertoire

Partisan social identity was positively associated with a change in argument repertoire from pre- to post-discussion. The stronger a student's partisan social identity, the more their argument repertoire tended to increase immediately following the discussion. These changes were counteracted in the model by the levels of disagreement reported by students and group levels of problem talk. Thus, students who had richer discussions with higher levels of disagreement tended to show reduced argument repertoire scores immediately following the discussion. Although it would be intuitive to think that students experienced more of both of these elements in mixed groups, students in mixed groups did not show any significant decrease in argument repertoire scores compared to their peers in uniform groups (although this may be partially explained by mixed groups also having a higher number of reported disagreement than uniform groups).

The finding that partisan social identity strength serves to increase argument repertoire is consistent with other work on partisan identity and learning (Kunda, 1990; Lodge & Tabor, 2013). Such a finding once again emphasizes the need for teachers to consider the tendencies of partisans when designing discussion experiences. In this case, given that higher levels of disagreement were predictive of decreased argument repertoire, it may be wise to place partisans in mixed-opinion groups where they are likely to encounter disagreement.

Two weeks after the discussion, students completed a final argument repertoire measure and the change from Q2 to Q3 was calculated. The explanatory picture for argument repertoire change at the end of the study is more complex than that immediately following the discussion. Like changes from the pre- to post-questionnaires, it seems that the level of group problem talk was again influential in reducing argument repertoire scores. However, the effect for level of disagreement did not explain as much variance in this model as did an interaction term between partisan social identity and group condition. Similar to the group condition interaction effect when predicting levels of affective polarization, this interaction effect produces a surprising result for uniform groups, even while the mixed group results are expected. In the mixed group, increased partisan social identity predicts increased argument repertoire. The uniform group, however, shows the opposite effect; students with higher partisan social identities show reductions in argument repertoire while those with lower social identities showed a marked increase.

Once again, there is a counterintuitive moderating effect for group condition. Similar to the interaction term results for affective polarization discussed earlier, there may be issues with the sample (quirks of the particular school context) or measurement (highly partisan individuals having nowhere to go but down on the Argument repertoire score). It is also important, however, to consider the possibility that some part of the discussion process is responsible for the unexpected results. Namely, it may have to do with partisans in the uniform groups being unable (or not feeling motivated) to learn more about their own side of the argument from their group members. Students high in

social identity in a uniform partisan group may not have anything to learn from their co-partisan peers in terms of arguments (whereas low partisan social identity students may learn a lot from those who tend to have stronger identities). This would cause high levels of change in low social identity partisans and little or no change in high social identity partisans, causing the negative association seen in the model.

As with the results for affective polarization, the mixed group results illustrate a positive relationship between partisan social identity and change in argument repertoire. Students with high partisan social identity scores tend to increase their argument repertoire scores while students with lower partisan social identity scores tend to show a decrease in the score. Students with lower partisan social identities may be more open to difference when placed in mixed groups, and would therefore show a more even balance of information at the end of the discussion exercise. High partisan social identity scores, in contrast, may indicate that the individual is threatened by other perspectives, and may seek to reinforce their identities by either learning new arguments in support of their position or, more likely, ignoring arguments against their position.

These results suggest a number of questions for research and practice. A primary area of concern is whether students are recalling alternative perspectives they learned during the discussion. If students are not retaining the information that is in opposition to their positions, then it is questionable whether the discussion is fulfilling its democratic purpose. Teachers must strive to ensure that discussions are not just topical one-off events. Given the wide array of content needing to be taught in any civic education scenario, it is impractical for most teachers to spend entire semesters on a single topic just

to ensure better recall. Part of the difficulty is the inauthenticity of a school discussion. Since the students are participating as part of their course, they are likely having a conversation that they might not have had otherwise. In such a situation, even the most open-minded student, partisan or not, would find it difficult to retain information that does not fit neatly into their schemas. Ideally, civic education would be framed as a process where one's views were constantly challenged and students believed that every activity contributed to their growth as members of an engaged, democratic populace. Researchers should examine the circumstances under which students show long-term retention of identity-inconsistent information. Practitioners should seek to promote climates that encourage as much engagement with differences as possible in the classroom and continually reinforce the value of understanding multiple perspectives on each issue.

Both the current and previous chapter have shared and discussed results from a study of online discussions. The final chapter will summarize these results, revisit implications for research and practice, and identify the contributions to the field of social studies research made by this study.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study examined four lines of inquiry related to partisanship and the social studies classroom. These four research questions are listed below:

R1: Are partisan students different from their non-partisan peers in terms of political and civic knowledge, sense of political efficacy, and perceptions of the classroom environment (e.g., climate for discussion, perceptions of classmates, and teacher opinion)?

R2: Do partisan students behave differently than their non-partisan peers in the context of small group deliberations? Does the composition of deliberative groups (uniformly partisan or mixed) moderate these behaviors?

R3: Are partisan and non-partisan students impacted differently by deliberation? Specifically, are changes in sense of political efficacy, opinions about political groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), or issue opinions different between partisans and non-partisans? Does deliberative group composition moderate these changes?

R4: Does the strength of students' partisanship influence the degree to which they consider differing opinions or opposing arguments?

In this chapter, I summarize the results of my investigation into these four questions and provide recommendations for teachers and researchers. Lastly, I place the present study in the context of the broader field of social studies and interdisciplinary research.

Summary of Results

In the previous two chapters, I provided evidence of the impact of student partisanship before, during, and after an online discussion. In doing so, I have examined four areas: differences between partisans and non-partisans prior to the discussion, differences in behaviors these two groups exhibit during a discussion, differences in outcomes following a discussion, and differences in partisan and non-partisans ability to consider arguments.

The evidence gathered from the two participating schools shows baseline differences between partisans and non-partisans in civic knowledge (in the case of strong partisanship) and both internal and external political efficacy. Additionally, when students perceive their partisanship as different from the teacher, they also tend to perceive that classroom climate as less open. Further, students' perception of their teacher's or classmates' ideology seems to affect their evaluations of their teacher more than their perception of the teacher's partisanship. Student evaluations of the course were responsive to both perceptions of teacher partisanship and ideology. These findings illustrate that student partisanship is a factor that merits consideration by teachers and researchers.

During a discussion, partisans engage in more "problem talk," or direct discussion of the problem facing the group, primarily relying on argumentation. These arguments can include hypothetical examples, appeals to emotion, or simply stating reasons for their position that are unsupported by facts. In other words, while partisans' contributions to

the online discussions were perhaps more frequent than those of other students, they were not necessarily of better quality.

Partisanship seems to be playing a role in how students are impacted by the discussion, though that role is not as straightforward as initially predicted. Following the discussion, partisan and non-partisan students exhibited an increase in external political efficacy that did not substantially decrease when measured again two weeks following the discussion. When measuring the degree to which students felt their opinion strength changed, however, partisanship was not as strong an influence as external political efficacy and civic knowledge. Further, students' affective polarization scores, which capture their balance of feelings towards the two major political parties, were impacted by the discussion, though in a manner that is contingent on the students' partisan social identity and group condition. Surprisingly, students discussing in uniform partisan groups did not show the expected positive relationship between identity strength and changes in affective polarization. When predicting that same relationship in mixed partisan groups, however, increases in the strength of a students' partisan social identity were predictive of increases in affective polarization, as expected.

Diving deeper into the effects of partisanship on the outcomes of an online discussion, I analyzed changes in students' argument repertoire scores. These scores reflect the number of arguments a student can generate for each side of the issue under discussion. As would be expected, students generally had argument repertoire scores that were positive, meaning that they could generate more arguments for their own position than the opposing position. Regardless of whether they were in mixed or uniform groups,

students tended to show a drop in the number of opposing arguments when measured two weeks following the discussion. When examining the changes with regression, partisanship significantly predicted increases in the argument repertoire score from the pre- to post-discussion questionnaires. The effect of partisan social identity on argument repertoire from the post-discussion questionnaire to the end of the study questionnaire was contingent on student group condition. Interestingly, the uniform groups showed an inverse relationship between partisan social identity and argument repertoire, while mixed groups showed the expected positive relationship.

While in many cases the relationship between partisanship and student behavior during the study was expected, there are many cases where it was not. It is possible that these findings represent artifacts of the sample or the design of the discussion forums. On the other hand, the tendency of weakly identified partisans in uniform groups to show increases in both affective polarization and argument repertoire could indicate that they are being influenced by those in their group with stronger partisan identities. The slight decrease in both affective polarization and argument repertoire on the part of strongly identified partisans in uniform groups, while perhaps also a product of sample, measurement, or context, could also indicate students were moderating their opinions. It is also possible that these students with strong partisan social identities were not threatened by the presence of opposing arguments in their groups and did not feel the need to reinforce their ideas as much as their peers with weaker partisan social identities. The need for more research into partisan social identities and their interaction with group conditions will be noted below.

Implications for Teachers and Researchers

Because the current study of partisan students is multifaceted, it has multiple implications for practice and research. I have collected and synthesized those recommendations in this section.

Implications for Teachers

First, teachers need to recognize that political partisanship, much like race, class, and gender, can strongly influence a given student's social identity (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Like these other sources of identity, partisanship should not be ignored in the classroom, but rather addressed with care and attention to its historical and social implications. This is a challenging task for teachers, because political identity, even though it is often a function of environmental influences, is seen as something chosen by the student and therefore not "protected" in the same ways non-voluntary sources of identity are. Partisan identity, however, can function as a barrier, inhibiting discourse in the classroom and impacting student learning. Just as teachers do not want students to "shut down" due to perceptions of unfairness based on race, gender, or class, they should strive to avoid similar shutdowns based on political identity. Based on the results of this study, open classroom climates are key to avoiding such situations and encouraging students of all political identities to participate.

Second, teachers should be aware of the "penalties" and "rewards" that accompany student perceptions of their partisan or ideological positions. While more empirical data is necessary to assess whether teachers should disclose their partisanship or political ideology (Hess & McAvoy, 2015), the present study illustrates the importance

of an open classroom climate. Students will likely guess at a teacher's partisan or ideological leanings and, regardless of whether they are correct or not, these guesses influence their perceptions of the classroom. Having an open classroom climate, however, can mitigate the negative impacts of perceived political and ideological distance.

Third, teachers have to constantly challenge students to hear and build empathy for diverse perspectives. The results of this study suggest that, for many students, alternative ideas are quickly forgotten in the weeks following a discussion exercise. While it may be difficult to constantly reinforce content, teachers can structure discussions and assignments in such a way as to humanize individuals who may disagree with a student (Haidt, 2012). Discussion formats, such as deliberation, that build empathy and emphasize seeking common ground can be employed for particularly divisive issues.

Fourth, this study challenges the assumption that mixed opinion groups always produce better understanding of diverse perspectives than uniform opinion groups. Students with weak partisan social identities moderated their feelings towards opposing political groups and balanced their argument repertoire scores after discussing in mixed groups. However, students who discussed in uniform groups showed the opposite pattern. Although it is impractical to for teachers to do in-depth analyses of students' partisan social identity prior to constructing discussion groups, teachers can monitor the outcomes of discussion exercises to better understand which groups of students might benefit from a different set of discussion partners.

Implications for Researchers

The results of the present study also suggest several directions for civic education researchers. To begin, education researchers must update their understanding of the political development of children. Researchers too often portray students as apolitical entities that, if molded correctly, will turn into discerning, committed citizens who vote and act based on rational consideration rather than partisan loyalty. This vision of students and citizens is woefully in need of updating (Achen & Bartels, 2016). Further, researchers must also update their understanding of schools as political spaces. A political classroom (Hess & McAvoy, 2015) may strive for open consideration of all viewpoints, but this study reveals that there is much happening beneath the surface of such spaces that merits consideration in social studies research.

Similarly, while high-quality democratic education, discussion pedagogy included, provides numerous benefits, researchers must not be naïve about its potential to solve all the problems that accompany divisive partisan times. Scholars of civic education should conduct more studies that examine student cognition before, during, and after discussions to clearly identify the mental processes that govern students' participation in and response to these pedagogies. Such research can provide a clearer understanding of the limits of discussions and deliberations and, possibly, suggest modifications or entirely new pedagogies that may better address the problems of partisan division.

Student partisanship, while little explored in social studies, does not operate in isolation. Rather, it likely intersects and interacts with other elements of student identity. Because this study is one of the first investigations of student partisanship, I chose not to focus on other elements of identity, such as race, class, or gender. Additionally, the

context of the two schools did not provide enough diversity of race or class to meaningfully analyze differences in these areas. Future research should include partisanship as a factor of student identity and examine the intersections of these identities in the classroom.

There is also a great need in social studies education for more research directly observing classroom discussions and measuring the mental processes involved. Such research should seek to replicate and extend the results of this study while addressing its limitations. For example, while the selected sample provided a number of advantages, the primary one being a diverse partisan environment, there are number of disadvantages that could be rectified in replications. A sample with greater diversity of race and income could provide insights into the interactions between political, racial, and class identities. A larger student sample size would also allow for more complex analyses and greater statistical power to detect differences between partisans and non-partisans. Replication with a diverse array of school sites and discussion topics would test whether the effects found in this study were unique to its particular context.

Despite providing a deeper look at student partisanship than previous work in the social studies, this study still leaves many aspects of student partisanship unexplored. For example, while the present study examined differences between partisan and non-partisan students in civic knowledge and political efficacy, there are a number of potentially consequential correlates of civic behavior that could also impact students' civic behavior and development. Concepts such as political cynicism (e.g. Erber & Lau, 1990), a variable potentially related to political disengagement among youth, could provide

further insight into the factors that influence student participation in discussions. In addition, the concepts featured in this work, such as affective polarization and motivated reasoning can be examined in greater depth and from different perspectives.

Beyond research questions of student partisanship, this study illustrates that drawing on the disciplines of political science and psychology to inform research questions can prove fruitful. There are many elements of adult political behavior that could be influential in the classroom and researchers can use studies of adults in other social science disciplines to inspire research in schools. One potential area of exploration particularly relevant to studying student discourse is moral foundations theory (Feinberg & Willer, 2015; Haidt, 2012). Psychologists have often used moral foundations theory to research individuals' tendency to speak "past" one another. Insights from such studies could help make student discussions more effective and meaningful. As noted earlier, interdisciplinary work in social studies is imperative and the fields of political science and psychology have much to offer teachers and researchers.

Contributions and Conclusions

A major contribution of this study is that it bridges the gap between social studies research and that in political science and psychology. Despite discussing many of the same issues regarding political deliberations, social studies researchers and those from political science and psychology rarely cross paths (Clark & Avery, 2016; Knowles & Clark, in preparation). Few works in social studies education examine student thinking or behavior using instruments from other disciplines (see Kahne & Bowyer, 2017 for an exception). As such, partisanship and its influence on thinking and behavior, an issue of

concern to political scientists and psychologists, has gone largely unstudied in education despite its relevance to contemporary citizenship. Recognizing this deficiency, Castro and Knowles (2017) argue, "any study or theoretical work exploring democratic citizenship within the field of social studies education should be regarded as incomplete if it fails to incorporate theories and empirical findings from other fields" (p. 309). In addition to incorporating concepts such as affective polarization and motivated reasoning, the present study provides evidence that they are present and meaningful in the social studies classroom. These findings further emphasize the benefits to social studies research and practice from interdisciplinary research. By incorporating these and other concepts into understandings of students' civic learning, the civic mission of social studies education is enhanced.

This study also illustrates that the benefits of interdisciplinary work need not flow only from other disciplines to social studies. Rather, important concepts from social studies research can inform studies of political science and psychology. A key example of such a benefit is the open classroom climate measure. The present study finds that open classroom climate moderates the influence of partisan social identity on evaluations of teachers and affective polarization. While open classroom climate has been used in studies of political socialization (e.g., Schulz et al., 2010), I have not found it in any work on political polarization. Studies of partisan behavior in political science and psychology can gain from incorporating this measure (in the form of recall questions) or adapting it for adult political conversations. Given the complexity of political behavior, social scientists should draw on as many explanatory tools as possible.

The political divisions in American society do not seem to be abating of their own accord and, in many ways, are deepening (Pew Research, 2014, 2016). Social studies should follow the lead of political scientists, psychologists, and scholars from a number of other fields by making an effort to understand the processes that drive these divisions, particularly in educational contexts. This study provides a unique look into students' partisan feelings, or lack thereof, and the impacts they can have on the classroom during a discussion exercise. This study illustrates that partisan identities, though often ignored by social studies research, are correlated with differences in student knowledge, dispositions, and perceptions of the classroom. Further, partisan identities shaped how students interacted in the context of an online discussion of a controversial issue. Lastly, student partisanship predicted how students responded to the discussion in terms of their recall of information, changes of opinion, and feelings about political opponents. If social studies classrooms are to develop the citizenship capabilities of all students, understanding the impact of partisanship in the classroom is the first step towards realizing this goal for students of all political persuasions.

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Appendix A – Survey Measures

Internal Political Efficacy
1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), α = .88 at Q3

1. Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. (reverse coded)
2. I feel like I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
3. I think I am better informed about politics than most people my age.
4. I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.
5. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.

External Political Efficacy
1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), α = .76 at Q3

1. People like me don't have any say about what the government does. (reverse coded)
2. So many people vote in national elections that it doesn't matter much whether I vote or not. (reverse coded)
3. Public officials don't care much about what people like me think. (reverse coded)

Political/Civic Knowledge
Students typed their responses in a text box underneath each question.

1. Which political party currently has the most members in the United States House of Representatives?
2. Who is currently the Vice President of the United States?
3. Who is currently the governor of [state where research took place]?
4. How long is the term of a United States Senator?
5. How much of a majority in both houses of Congress is needed to override a presidential veto?

Open Classroom Climate Scale
1 (Never) to 5 (Always), α = .83

When you discuss social and political issues during regular lessons, how often do the following things happen?
1. Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds.
2. Teachers encourage students to express their opinions.
3. Students bring up current political events for discussion in class.
4. Students express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students.

5. Teachers encourage students to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions.
6. Teachers present several sides of an issue when explaining it in class.

Perceptions of Classmates and Teachers
Teacher Evaluation Scale, α = .86

1. How would you rate your teacher's knowledge of the course material? 1 (Poor) to 4 (Excellent)
2. Would you say your teacher cares about students and their success? 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost all the time)
3. Would you say the teacher presented materials in an objective and unbiased manner? 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost all the time)
4. The teacher shows a great deal of interest in the subject. 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost all the time)
5. The instructor worked to provide a comfortable learning environment. 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost all the time)
6. The instructor graded assignments fairly and consistently. 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost all the time)
7. Overall, I would rate this teacher as excellent. 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
8. Overall, I would recommend this teacher to other students. 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

Course Evaluation Scale, α = .78
1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

1. This course increased my interest in the subject.
2. I learned a great deal in this course compared to others.
3. I put more effort into this course than most others I have taken.
4. Overall, I would rate this course as excellent.
5. Overall, I would recommend this course to other students.

Teacher Partisanship and Ideology
Where do you think your teacher falls on the following partisan identity scale?
1 (Strong Republican) to 7 (Strong Democrat)

Where do you think your teacher falls on the following political ideology scale?
1 (Strongly Conservative) to 7 (Strongly Liberal)

Classmates' Partisanship and Ideology
Where do you think most of your classmates fall on the following partisan identity scale?
1 (Strong Republican) to 7 (Strong Democrat)

Where do you think most of your classmates fall on the following political ideology scale?
1 (Strongly Conservative) to 7 (Strongly Liberal)

Perceived Disagreement and Opinion Change

During your discussion, how often did you find yourself disagreeing with your group?
1 (0-10%) to 10 (91-100%)

During your discussion, did your opinion on [issue] move or change? Please use the scale below to indicate how your opinion did or did not move.
1 (Moved strongly away from my previous opinion) to 9 (My opinion was strongly reinforced)

Affective Polarization (Feeling Thermometers)
Please use the sliders below to illustrate how you feel about different political groups in our country. You can move the sliders to anywhere between 0 and 100. NOTE: Even if you want to leave the slider where it is, you must click on the slider for the computer to record your response.
0 (Feel Negatively), 50 (Feel Neutral), 100 (Feel positively)

1. Republicans
2. Democrats
3. Independents

Argument Repertoire
In the spaces below, please list the arguments or reasons that *support* your opinion on [issue]. Please list as many reasons (up to 6) that you can think of. Write only one reason per space. You do not have to use all the spaces.

In the spaces below, please list the arguments or reasons that somebody who is *against* your position on [issue] might give. Please list as many (up to 6) reasons you can think of. Write only one reason per space. You do not have to use all the spaces.

Student Partisanship and Ideology

Which of the following best describes your political ideology?
1(Strongly Conservative) to 7 (Strongly Liberal)

Which of the following political groups do you most identify with?
Republican, Independent, Democrat, Other Party

If student marks Republican or Democrat…

Would you call yourself a strong [Republican/Democrat] or not a very strong [Republican/Democrat]?
Strong Democrat, Not a very strong democrat.

If student marks Independent…
Would you say you are closer to the Republican or the Democratic Party?
Republican Party, Democratic Party, Neither

Partisan Social Identity

$\alpha = .89$ for Democrats, $\alpha = .91$ for Republicans, $\alpha = .90$ for Independents

1. To what extent do you feel certain about your [party name] political outlook? 1 (Not at all) to 4 (A great deal)
2. To what extent is your [party name] political outlook a reflection of your core moral beliefs or ideas? 1 (Not at all) to 4 (A great deal)
3. To what extent is your [party name] political outlook connected to your beliefs about fundamental questions of right and wrong? 1 (Not at all) to 4 (A great deal)
4. How important is being [party name] to you? 1 (Not at all important) to 4 (Extremely important)
5. How important is the term [party name] to you? 1 (Not at all important) to 4 (Extremely important)
6. When you talk about [party name], how often do you say "we" instead of "they?" 1(Never) to 4 (All the time)
7. To what extent do you think of yourself as a/an [party name]? 1 (Not at all) to 4 (A great deal)

Social Studies/Civic Educational Experiences
Based on your school experience up to this point, how often do you… ($\alpha = .74$)
1 (Never) to 5 (Once a week or more)

1. Spend class time discussing current events?
2. Have teachers encourage you to discuss political and social issues about which people have different opinions?
3. Do research on social, political, or community issues for your class?
4. Do community projects for your classes?
5. Have teachers require you to keep up with politics or government either by reading the newspaper, watching TV, or using the Internet?
6. Feel that the knowledge you get from your civics/government/social studies class is useful in your current, everyday life?

School Democratic Climate

When you think about your school as a whole, how much do you agree/disagree with the following?
1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), α = .73

1. Students have a say in how the school is run.
2. In general, students can disagree with teachers, if they are respectful.
3. In general, students are encouraged to express opinions.
4. Students feel like they are part of a community where people care about each other.

Community and School Participation
1 (Never) to 3 (Within the last year)

Community Involvement (α = .62)
Have you ever been involved in any of the following activites?
1. Youth organization affiliated with a political party or union
2. Environmental organization
3. Human rights organization
4. A voluntary group doing something to help in the community
5. An organization collecting money for a social cause
6. A cultural organization based on ethnicity or nationality
7. A group of young people campaigning about an issue

School Involvement (α = .70)
At school, have you ever done any of the following activities?

1. Active participation in a debate
2. Voted for class representative, student council, or other forms of student government
3. Taken part in decision-making about how the school is run
4. Taken part in discussions in a student assembly or meeting
5. Ran for class representative, student council, or other student government position

Parental and Peer Civic Involvement
1 (Never/Hardly ever) to 5 (Daily).

How often do you talk about politics with your parents/guardians?
How often do you talk about politics with your friends?

Perceived Polarization
In general, do you feel that Republicans and Democrats… (α = .78)
1 (Not at all) to 5 (A great deal)

1. Respect each other?
2. Trust each other?
3. Like each other?

Appendix B – Discussion Forum Instructions

Loomis High School
You have been conducting research on the issue of "Stop and Frisk" for this class. Using this forum, you will be having a discussion with several of your peers on this issue. Specifically, you will be discussing the following proposition:

> *"Stop and Frisk" should be adopted nationwide as a means of reducing crime.*

During the course of your discussion, please make sure to provide at least one original post and one reply to one of your group mate's posts.

Nichols High School
You have been conducting research on the issue of taxes for this class. Using this forum, you will be having a discussion with several of your peers on this issue. Specifically, you will be discussing the following proposition:

> *Taxes should be raised to more evenly distribute income and better fund government programs.*

During the course of your discussion, please make sure to provide at least one original post and one reply to one of your group mate's posts.

Appendix C – Interview Questions

1. *General.* You participated in an online discussion about [issue]. In general, what did you think about your discussion?

a. What did you think about your discussion partners?

b. Were you able to tell anything about your discussion partners (like their partisan affiliation)? [If yes: How long did it take you figure that out about them?]

c. How comfortable were you sharing your ideas on politics with the group?

d. Was there any disagreement in your group? If so, how did you handle it?

e. Did your opinion change at all during the course of the discussion? In other words, did you feel more strongly about your original opinion, was your opinion challenged during the discussion, or somewhere in between?

2. Politics in the classroom:

a. Do you discuss political issues often in the classroom? How often?

b. Are you comfortable sharing your ideas on politics in the classroom? Why or why not?

c. How do you think most students in your class feel about politics? How do you know this?

d. Do you think your teacher has a political opinion? If so: what do you think it is, and how do you know?

e. What about outside of school? Do you follow politics? What do you think about politicians? Political parties?

3. *Student Voice:* Do you feel your opinion heard during the discussion?

5. *Suggestions:* Do you have any suggestions for changing the online discussions that would make it a better experience for students?

6. *Overall:* Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about the online discussions that would help me have a better understanding of your experiences?

7. *Conclusion*: I've asked a lot of questions today. Is there anything you'd like to ask me?